

**NEW LOOK!**

# Kitchen GARDEN

February 2011 £3.60  
www.kitchengarden.co.uk



**FREE\***  
\*Just pay p&p

**5 packets of  
early-sow seeds**



**PRODUCE PERFECT  
PARSNIPS EVERY TIME  
WITH OUR BACK TO BASICS GUIDE**



**HARVEST YOUR EARLIEST  
EVER TASTY CROPS!  
WE SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE**



**BEAT PLOT WAITING LISTS  
WITH HUGH FEARNLEY-WHITTINGSTALL**

**PLUS!**

- Grow bumper crops of peas and beans
- Buy and build a polytunnel
- Fit in more delicious apples
- Get the facts on companion planting
- Prepare housing for new hens
- Your letters and top tips

## Sow a little sunshine

*with easy growing courgettes*

**WIN  
£1023  
WORTH OF  
GARDENING  
GOODIES!**

## Bob Flowerdew

*What climate change will  
really mean to gardeners*

MORTONS

£3.60

No. 161 FEBRUARY 2011



9 771369 182102





# LIVING THE DREAM

*in a Premier Polytunnel*



**NEW TO THE UK, 5-layer Thermal Anti Drip polythene covers** **LARGER diameter steel hoops**

**WIDE single doors** **UNIVERSAL fixing brackets** **Construction Helpline** **25 years experience**

*enjoy the outside, inside*

**Keep greedy  
pests at bay with Premier  
CLOCHES & FRUIT CAGES**



**Premier Quality • Premier Service • Popular Prices!**



**ORDER YOUR 'DREAM  
POLYTUNNEL' &**

**SAVE  
15%!**

**Buy online @ [www.premierpolytunnels.co.uk](http://www.premierpolytunnels.co.uk)**  
**or call for a brochure: 01282 811250**





MAIN PHOTO: Kitchen garden

© Copyright Mortons Media Group Ltd. Reproduction in any manner, in whole or part, without prior approval in writing is prohibited. The publisher cannot accept responsibility for errors in articles or advertisements, or for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or illustrations.  
www.kitchengarden.co.uk

**Editorial:**  
Tel 01507 529396, Fax 01507 529495  
**Editor:** Steve Ott, [stott@mortons.co.uk](mailto:stott@mortons.co.uk)  
**Deputy Editor:** Emma Rawlings, [erawlings@mortons.co.uk](mailto:erawlings@mortons.co.uk)

**Designer:** Leanne Cropley  
**Reprographics:** Jonathon Schofield

**Advertising:**  
Tel 01507 524004, Fax 01507 529499  
Divisional advertising manager: Tracey Glover-Brown, [tglover-brown@mortons.co.uk](mailto:tglover-brown@mortons.co.uk)  
**Advertising:** Bernadette Humphrey, [bhumphrey@mortons.co.uk](mailto:bhumphrey@mortons.co.uk)

**Brand manager:** Sarah Downing, [sdowning@mortons.co.uk](mailto:sdowning@mortons.co.uk)

**Production manager:** Craig Lamb

**Operations director:** Dan Savage  
**Commercial director:** Nigel Hole  
**Business development director:** Terry Clark  
**Managing director:** Brian Hill

**Customer services, back issues and subscriptions:**  
Tel 01507 529529 24hr answerphone or visit  
[www.kitchengarden.co.uk/subscribe](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk/subscribe)

**Archivist:** Jane Skayman, 01507 529423  
[jskayman@mortons.co.uk](mailto:jskayman@mortons.co.uk)

**Distribution:**  
COMAG, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex, UB7 7QE. Tel 01895 433600  
Printing: William Gibbons & Son, Wolverhampton  
Published: Monthly by Mortons Media Group Ltd, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR. Tel 01507 523456, Fax 01507 529301

**The talking KG**  
Kitchen Garden is available on cassette tape at very reasonable rates to anyone unable to read normal type. Details from the Talking Newspaper Association of the UK on 01435 866102.  
ISSN 1369-1821



**Advert deadline:** 11 January 2011  
**Next issue:** 3 February 2011

[www.kitchengarden.co.uk](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk)

# Welcome to Kitchen Garden

## Steady as you sow

As I write this the first heavy snow of winter has only just thawed in Lincolnshire and we are braced for a return to minus temperatures and another covering by the end of the week. Nothing compared to the blizzards readers further north will have experienced, but we'd all surely be forgiven then for wondering if the new growing season will ever arrive. However, as it does every year, things will suddenly improve and those seeds which have been hermetically sealed into their packets all winter can finally be released to burst into life.

For the moment, however, you'll find that many of the writers in KG this month are urging caution – none more so than our two experienced gardening hands (I'd better not call them 'old' or worse still 'veteran') Bob Sherman and Edwin Oxlade. This month they debate when is the best time to start sowing outdoors and a number of you have chipped in with your advice too. All may have slightly different opinions on this depending on where they live, but the general consensus is that it isn't just yet! But that's not to say that there isn't plenty to do to prepare the plot for warmer days as you'll see on our jobs pages starting on page 8 and of course if you have a greenhouse or polytunnel, then you have the luxury of being able to start some early crops right now and to steal a march on the rest of us.

If you like the sound of being able to get sowing despite the weather, you'll be interested in our feature from Joyce Russell starting on page 77 this month. Joyce has long known the benefits of

growing under cover and explains how to choose and build a tunnel that is just right for your garden or allotment.

If you just can't contain yourself any longer, parsnips are one crop that can be sown in favoured areas this month and Andrew Tokely has all the info you need to grow your best – and straightest – parsnips ever starting on page 18. I'll certainly be taking his advice this year to plant in bore holes. I had to do a lot of digging to find the poor specimens I dug for the picture above as most of the fanged, finger-like roots looked like something out of an episode of *Doctor Who* or *Star Wars*.

As you'll read on our news pages this month (and on our website [www.kitchengarden.co.uk](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk)), KG did rather well in the recent national awards for the gardening media held annually in London. One of our winners was Joe Maiden who was singled out for his sound practical advice and he uses this again in his latest tried and tasted feature, which this month turns the spotlight on courgettes. Be sure to read his article before ordering and growing your courgettes this year.

Finally, don't miss out on all the great offers and giveaways we have lined up for you this month including five packs of early-sow seeds for just £2.29 p&p. No worries with those – they are sure to arrive at the perfect time for you to get busy!

Happy plotting

Steve

## KG CROP STARS

Just a few of the delicious crops featured in this issue...



**PARSNIPS**  
18



**COURGETTES**  
22



**PEAS AND BEANS**  
40, 44



KG are media partners with NAGTrust – helping to make Britain's allotments better



NSALG recommends Kitchen Garden Magazine, the number one magazine for growers of fruit and veg



Kitchen Garden and the National Vegetable Society – together helping the nation to grow better veg



# Contents

This month in Kitchen Garden magazine –  
ideas and essential info for your plot

\* Denotes cover story

## NEWS

### 6 FIRST PICKINGS

All the latest news and views from the world of kitchen gardening

## YOUR PLOT

### 8 JOBS FOR FEBRUARY

Essential tasks for your plot from the KG team

### 12 UNDERCOVER

Sue Stickland's seasonal tips on growing under cover in polytunnel or greenhouse

### 14 YOUR PLOTS

We take a look at some readers' veg gardens

### 18 BACK TO BASICS – PARSNIPS \*

Your how-to-grow guide with expert writer, Andrew Tokely

### 22 TRIED AND TASTED - COURGETTES \*

Joe Maiden takes an in-depth look at eight different varieties of this fast-growing veg

### 26 VEG PLOT ANSWERS

Your fruit and veg questions answered

### 28 YOUR LETTERS AND TIPS \*

### 30 READERS' EXCHANGE

Ask a question or help other readers

### 32 WEBWATCH \*

Helen Gazeley reviews some garden-related websites



12

## ALLOTMENT LIFE

### 34 THE FABULOUS PYRAMIDS \*

Adrian Baggaley explains how to train apple trees into a cone shape and what the benefits of this form are

### 38 LAND OF THE GIANTS

Medwyn Williams has some tips on growing giant vegetables

### 40 FAMILY MATTERS NEW SERIES \*

Joyce Russell takes a look at the different vegetable families and how it affects their cultivation

### 44 PESTWATCH - BEAN WEEVILS NEW SERIES

In her new series Lucy Halliday looks at different pests and how to control them

### 46 THE SLEEPING SOIL

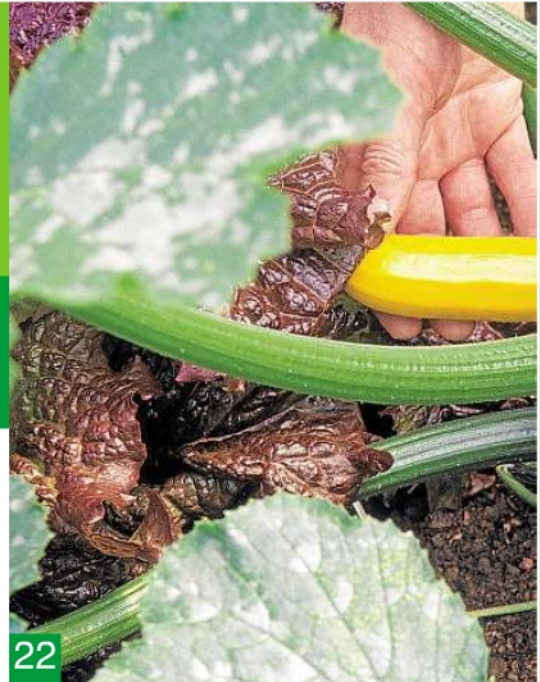
We depend on the soil to grow great crops and Juliet Barber has some advice on its care through the winter months

### 48 DIG IT DIARY NEW SERIES

Taking on an allotment for the first time is very exciting for Naomi Slade. We follow her progress through the season



14



22



70

## ORGANIC GARDENING

### 50 THE CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE\*

Bob Flowerdew looks at how changing climate across the world will affect the crops we can grow

### 54 OVER THE GARDEN FENCE NEW SERIES

Bob Sherman and Edwin Oxlade go head to head on controversial gardening issues

### 56 VEGAN VEG - PREPARING FOR THE SEASON AHEAD

Lonnie and Richard Morris are getting seeds ordered and the propagator ready

### 58 A PERFECT PARTNERSHIP \*

Joyce Russell puts some common gardening principles to the test and this month she tests some companion planting partnerships





## 62 NATURE NOTES - PRESERVING OUR PEAT BOGS

Tanya Perdikou of the Wildlife Trust explains why it is important to save our remaining peat bogs

## 64 EARLY CROPS FRENCH STYLE \*

Rebecca Pow visits a nursery that is using some 19th century French growing techniques to grow early veg

## 68 PATCHWORK PLOT PART TWO

Sue Hinton on growing veg intensively in a small area



Having trouble finding a copy of this magazine? Why not just ask your local newsagent to reserve you a copy each month

## WHAT TO BUY

### 70 PICK OF THE CROP PART TWO

Gaby Bartai takes a look at some of the new varieties in the 2011 seed catalogues

### 74 IN THE GARDEN SHED

Great product ideas for kitchen gardeners

### 77 FANTASTIC PLASTIC \*

This extract from Joyce Russell's new book on growing in polytunnels offers advice on buying and construction

## SEASONAL RECIPES

### 88 CULINARY COLOUR THERAPY

Christina Maxfield suggests some recipes for red cabbage

## READERS SAVERS

### 37 APPLE TREES OFFER KG EXCLUSIVE

### 79 POLYTUNNEL BOOK OFFER

### 80 SPECIAL KG OFFERS \*

FREE Early seed collection (Just pay £2.29 p&p)

### 82 GIVEAWAYS WORTH OVER £1023 \*

Your chance to win Growpots, propagators and tickets to a brand new veg show



## CHICKENS

### 84 PREPARE TO SHOW YOU CARE \*

New writer, Jane Howorth, on getting ready to home your new chickens

## OTHER FEATURES

### 86 NEXT MONTH

What's in store for March issue of Kitchen Garden magazine (don't miss your free seeds!)

### 90 SUBSCRIBE TO KITCHEN GARDEN

### 92 DIARY DATES

### 93 GIVEAWAYS COUPON

### 94 LAST WORD

KG Reader, Julie Freeman, on sharing her plot with hungry deer

# SUBSCRIBE TO KITCHEN GARDEN P90



# FEBRUARY NEWS

Do you have some hot stories for our news pages?  
Send them to Steve: [sott@mortons.co.uk](mailto:sott@mortons.co.uk)

## KG wins media awards

The prestigious Garden Media Guild awards took place in the heart of London in December with hundreds of members – many of whom are familiar faces from TV and magazines – attending.

The awards celebrate all that is brightest and best in magazines, newspapers, radio, the internet or TV in the UK and Kitchen Garden and its contributors came away with an incredible haul of five awards. These were Joe Maiden (Best Practical Journalist) for his Back to Basics pieces and the Environmental Award, which went to John Walker for his Digging Deeper piece in KG's August 2010 issue called 'Kicking the Habit'. Kitchen Garden itself was named as a finalist in the hotly contested, Garden Publication of the Year category.

Of Joe's work the judges said: "Joe's articles were full of sound practical advice. They were easy to understand and encouraging for both the

beginner and experienced gardener. We could see the magazines opened up at Joe's column propped up on the potting bench, guiding folk fluently through the processes and not ending up on a coffee table in the drawing room."

And of John's piece they commented: "John Walker shoots from the hip, shattering any illusions grow-your-own gardeners might have that they are greener than green."

He seized the opportunity presented by the catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico to highlight the link to just how many oil-based products are in daily use on allotments and in gardens throughout the land. Having made our oil-dependency crystal clear with a long list of plastics, pesticides and paraphernalia, John then challenges his readers to lead the campaign to refuse, re-use, recycle and press for more of our 'must-have' garden products to be manufactured from recycled raw materials, thereby reducing the need for more fresh oil production.

John was also a finalist in the prestigious Journalist of the Year category, while long-time KG contributor Andrew Tokely was recognised for his popular and informative Plotter's Year features in KG throughout 2010. Andrew was honoured as a finalist in the Best Practical Journalist category, having just been pipped to the post by fellow contributor, Joe Maiden.

KG editor Steve Ott said: "This is a wonderful result for Kitchen Garden and recognition of the high standards set by the magazine and its writers. The awards celebrate all that is best in professional gardening journalism and I am so proud of all our contributors, who work hard every month, along with the backroom staff, – the editorial, production, marketing and advertising teams – to make KG the best and most informative gardening magazine on the market and the one that so many thousands of gardeners who grow their own look to for advice and inspiration."



KG's Joe Maiden receives his award

## Giant citrus fruit in Wiltshire

A huge citrus fruit (*Citrus medica*) or citron as it is more commonly known has been grown in a greenhouse at the historic 200-year-old walled garden at Lackham, Wiltshire. The greenhouse is used to hold and display tropical plants for students to work with and for their plant identification skills. (School visitors also really appreciate the giant lemons!) Many of the plants are grown in long-term beds and are examples of economically important tropical crops. The plants are grown at an air temperature of 22C (72F).

The citrus plant is about 38 years old and the tree is regularly pruned to maintain fruiting yield and mulched annually with well-rotted farmyard manure. It also receives liquid feed through the regular watering system.

Grounds manager Stan Rawlings said: "The fruits are left on the tree until they drop; and some that have fallen have weighed between 1-2kg (approx 2-4lb). The larger fruits are still on the tree. In 1989 we held the world record for a fruit that weighed 4.8kg (10lb 9oz) and had a girth of 80cm (31½in), the current world record is 5.27kg (11lb 10oz) and was in Israel 2003. Our largest fruit this year is less massive than this, unfortunately, but is still growing."

For more information on the college, their website is [www.wiltshire.ac.uk](http://www.wiltshire.ac.uk) and the campus phone number is 01249 466800; Lackham is situated just outside the National Trust village of Lacock.



Pictured with the large fruit are Gemma Welton, a member of the grounds staff and Kayleigh Marshall, this year's garden student apprentice

## Spud-u-licious event offers advice for potato lovers

There are lots of potato day events around the country at this time of year. It is a chance to buy a wide variety of seed potatoes, often in smaller quantities. Monkton Elm Garden and Pet Centre in Somerset is holding one of these events from 10-13 February.

General Manager, Norma Moore, explained: "We will have more than 56 seed potato varieties, one of the biggest collections in the West Country, on show."

There will be free information for people to take home on choosing seed potatoes, planting them, caring for the plants, harvesting the crop and storing the produce.

The Potato Festival will also include

complementary expert advice and a workshop and forum event from 2pm until 4pm on Thursday, 10 February and Friday, 11 February.

During the event, visitors will be invited to share their experiences and learn more about growing spuds.

The workshop and forum, which will be staffed by the team from the garden centre, will include free tea or coffee.

For further details about the Potato Festival please go along to Monkton Elm Garden & Pet Centre, which is located just off the A38 at Monkton Heathfield, call 01823 412381 or visit [www.monktonelmgardencentre.co.uk](http://www.monktonelmgardencentre.co.uk).

- Find more potato day events on page 92.



Tom Berry with spuds and products



## Myddelton House tips

Myddelton House Gardens are currently in the process of a two year Heritage Lottery Funded restoration project, focusing primarily on their kitchen garden.

To date, restoration work has been completed on the Victorian potting shed, Bowles' original cold frames and the Peach House. Further work to be completed includes the development of a visitor facility and Bowles Tea Room.

The Myddelton House Gardening Team have five top budget-busting gardening tips to save you pounds this winter.

1. Reuse old plant labels by rubbing down with an abrasive such as wire wool or a mild cleaning agent
2. Do as the Victorians did and make your own bird-scarers – stick bird feathers in potatoes and dangle them in your garden
3. Mulch bare areas of soil with a 5-8cm (2-3in) layer of well-rotted organic material to condition your soil, improve water retention and keep the weeds at bay. Ensure you apply the mulch only to moist soil and not dry or frozen soil as you want to keep moisture in and the frost out.
4. Collect seeds and start to raise your own plants. Use resource books or the internet to check on the appropriate method of seed storage and the best time to sow
5. Buy small plants to ensure they establish well, and allow them to mature

Myddelton House Gardens are open all year round offering a calm oasis that is easily accessible, only five minutes from the M25 (junction 25). It offers ample parking for coaches and cars, discounts for groups, guided walks and talks, many accessible pathways and intimate events such as Jazz and classical music evenings.

For more information please visit [www.leevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.leevalleypark.org.uk).



Mulch bare areas to improve soil structure

## Pupils dig for victory in compost competition

Former BBC *Gardeners' World* presenter, Toby Buckland, has presented prizes to budding young gardeners and cooks from across Devon and Somerset at an event for Taunton-based recycling company Viridor's Dig It, Grow It, Cook It, Eat It competition.

Around 60 schools from across the two counties entered the competition to grow their own veg and show how they feasted on their tasty crops.

Colin Drummond, Viridor Chief Executive, said: "What's great about the competition is it not only encourages children to get out into the garden, but also shows them how easy it is to eat healthily.

"To give the schools a head start we gave them packets of seeds and one tonne of our

Revive compost, a soil conditioner produced from Somerset's garden waste that has been used in gold medal-winning gardens at the Chelsea and Hampton court flower shows."

Toby Buckland said: "What the children have grown is spectacular! It shows they've fully understood the importance of recycling and that being a good gardener is as much about what you put into your soil as what you take out. The Dig it, Grow it, Eat it, Cook it campaign is much more though as so many children from across Devon and Somerset have learnt values and skills that will be of use for the rest of their lives and I'm thrilled to be involved."

Twelve winners shared hundreds of pounds in garden vouchers to spend in local garden centres.



Toby Buckland meets Colin Drummond, children and teachers from the winning schools

## Product news

### Monitor the weather

Gardeners are naturally more interested in the weather than most and as the threat of more extreme weather increases, Oregon Scientific, global expert in weather forecasting, is on hand to help you predict the unpredictable!

The Oregon Scientific range of Wireless Weather Stations delivers accurate weather forecasts for your own backyard. So, you'll have your very own personalised weather report for your local area for the next 12 to 24 hours. Extreme weather conditions can be anticipated through pressure trend warning messages and ice alerts. Great for advising when you need to protect those tender plants.

The Oregon Scientific BAR208HG Wireless Weather Station with Humidity and Weather Alert combines a wireless weather station with a radio controlled clock and calendar to bring you all the vital weather information – fog, frost, snow or wind – this winter. Price: £59.99. Available from [www.oregonscientific.co.uk](http://www.oregonscientific.co.uk).

### Cold snap is bad for birds

Gardeners depend on their garden birds to help keep plots pest free, yet a severe cold snap leaves many species struggling. "The right bird food is a matter of life and death," says Bill Oddie, one of the nation's favourite bird watching experts. And all the more so in this incredibly cold weather.

Also in the freezing weather, water and natural food sources are unavailable.

"Feeding birds is a great way to do your bit for nature - and to brighten your day too. Nothing beats seeing all those happy birds in your garden. But birds benefit from better food – just like we do.

"It's not just a question of throwing a lot of bread out of the back door, and getting it wrong can have dangerous consequences. In fact, a number of greenfinches have been found dead as a result of eating mouldy husk from poor quality bird food."

So, if you enjoy watching birds, proper feeding is one of the most important ways to care for them.

So check out Bill Oddie's new Bird Food Recipes website packed with information and a great range of really nutritious mixes for birds. Bill has created these with bird food experts Haith's, who have been blending and mixing bird food since 1937. From Mealworm Crumble to Essential Bird Breakfast, Bill says that all his recipes have special benefits, and attract different sorts of birds. For more information visit: [www.billsbirdfood.co.uk](http://www.billsbirdfood.co.uk)





# JOBS FOR FEBRUARY



Steve sows some early peas for May/June cropping in deep trays (these are Rootainers)

## FEBRUARY AT A GLANCE

### SOWING NOW...

Salad leaves, bulb onions, parsnips, broad beans, summer cabbage, summer lettuce, early peas, radishes, turnips

\*All early outdoor sowings will benefit from the protection of cloches or winter weight fleece.

### PLANTING NOW...

Soft and tree fruit, bare-rooted hedging plants, rhubarb, Jerusalem artichokes, onion and shallot sets, garlic



Time to sow and plant Jerusalem artichokes

### HARVESTING NOW...

Leeks, winter and savoy cabbages, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, celery, celeriac, leaf beet, salsify, scorzonera, spinach, swedes, turnips, endive, parsnips

### FROM STORE...

Beetroot, potatoes, carrots, apples, pears, onions, garlic

## Five minute fixes

With Jane Moore, gardening writer and head gardener at the Bath Priory

In these cold dreary days, I really need to think about spring for the sake of my sanity. Getting my potato crop underway is a good start.

- There's something so pleasurable about setting potatoes to chit, feeling their smooth skins as I look for the ends with the most eyes (rose end) and keep these uppermost. With the abundance of breakfast eggs eaten at the hotel I can always lay my hands on those enormous egg trays which are just perfect for chitting potatoes and, once I've placed the tubers in the trays I can even staple the potato label to the cardboard so I don't get mixed up.
- The best way to treat February is as a run up to the spring, I find. Start as you mean to go on this spring by servicing and sharpening your trusty old secateurs – they'll be seeing a lot of use later on! Strip them down and give them a good clean with some wire wool and a spot of metal cleaner to bring them up like new. Sharpen the blade with a whetstone, making sure you only sharpen one side of the secateurs blade, the other side has to lay flat against the opposing blade. Put them back together using a drop of oil to lubricate the moving parts.

- Although it's a cold job, this is the time I tend to do all my apple and pear tree pruning. This is not a job to rush and I've now had a chance to stand back and really study the trees without their leaves for a couple of months so I know what I need to do to improve their overall appearance. First of all I stick firmly to the removal of the 3Ds: the dead, diseased and damaged wood and then I concentrate on artistry and opening up the tree to allow in plenty of air and light.





## Tend to autumn raspberries

All the old canes of autumn-fruiting raspberries such as 'Autumn Bliss' and 'Allgold' can be cut down to ground level now and the area around them weeded, taking particular care to remove perennial weeds. Burn or otherwise discard of the canes as they may be harbouring pests and diseases.

Next month the soil around the roots can be given a dressing of general purpose fertiliser such as chicken or sheep manure pellets or Growmore to give spring growth a boost and this should be followed up with a generous mulch of well-rotted garden compost or manure to help retain moisture during the summer months and to suppress weeds.



Cut autumn raspberry canes down to ground level now and apply a mulch around the roots

## Prune currants and gooseberries

Woody soft fruit should be pruned before the buds burst in the spring and this must now be done without delay since gooseberries in particular are some of the first to get growing as conditions improve.

Red and whitecurrants tend to grow on a leg (a single stem) and are pruned differently to blackcurrants which usually form a stool (a bushy collection of shoots often from below soil level).

Red and whitecurrants should have their main shoots tipped back by half of last season's growth to outward-facing buds. Sideshoots are reduced to about 2.5cm (1in), again cutting to just above a healthy, well-placed bud.

Blackcurrants are different. These fruit best on one and two year-old stems and so pruning concentrates on producing a constant supply of young growth from the base. Simply cut back up to a third of the oldest shoots to ground level (this can in fact be done immediately after fruiting if you so wish). Other fruited branches can be cut back to healthy sideshoots.

The lower branches of gooseberries tend to bend towards the ground when laden with fruit. Avoid this by cutting back the main shoots by half and reducing all the sideshoots to 5cm (2in), to an outward-facing bud. Any shoots which are crowding the centre of the bush should be removed to allow light and air into the bush but also to make picking a little less painful!

In March feed and mulch the bushes as for autumn raspberries above.



Cut back the main shoots of gooseberries by half

## Rejuvenate mint

Mint dies back in the winter and comes to life again in the spring, so looks pretty forlorn at this time of year. It is usually grown in containers to prevent the creeping stems from taking over the plot, but the roots are so vigorous that they soon fill the compost and plants then become starved and lack vigour.

Lift clumps of mint from the garden or empty them from their containers now and split the clump into small sections, each with some healthy roots. Some can be replanted back into the container in fresh compost and covered with a cloche or placed in a cold frame or cold greenhouse where they will begin to shoot earlier than plants outside come the spring, giving you some early shoots. Of course if placed in a heated greenhouse they will grow away even more quickly.

Any plants that you don't need can be potted and given to friends and family, but do warn them about the plant's habit of taking over if allowed to do so!

See page Joyce Russell's feature on page 58 for advice on using mint as a companion plant.

## Plant early peas

Peas can be sown direct into well prepared soil now, providing your plot is free-draining and sunny. You will need a cloche to cover the rows until the worst of the winter weather has passed. However, if you have a frost-free greenhouse or polytunnel you could start some early crops now by sowing in guttering or into deep pots such as Rootainers.

Choose a suitable variety – the wrinkled types are the ones to look for. For more advice please turn to page 40.



An early crop of peas can be had by sowing now in trays or guttering

## Prepare the ground for asparagus

Asparagus is always very expensive to buy in the supermarket, so next month we will be explaining how to plant your very own asparagus bed. However, you can get a head start now by selecting a sunny, well-drained site and digging in plenty of well rotted organic matter such as manure or garden compost. Perennial weeds are one of the biggest problems with long-term crops such as this (asparagus should crop well for at least 15 years), so anything you are adding to the soil must be weed-free and when making your preparations be sure to remove any weed roots you come across.

If your soil is very weedy – perhaps you have recently reclaimed a neglected allotment or converted part of the garden for vegetables – it is best to cover the ground for a season with thick ground cover fabric or black polythene to kill the weeds prior to planting.



## KG video diaries

Every month keen kitchen gardener and gardening author Paul Peacock will be bringing you a top tip from his plot. You can also find out more by watching a video clip on this topic by visiting [www.kitchengarden.co.uk](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk)

### Boxing clever with onions

Traditionally sown on Boxing Day, onions can be started off through the winter and Paul has a few tricks that guarantee you a bumper crop.

The alliums; onions, garlic, shallots, chives, and a wondrous array of new, non aromatic, hybrids for the flower garden, are possibly the most useful plants known to man. They share two really important properties, apart from the wonderful flavours. They use sulphurous alkenes as a defence mechanism against infection – we can make use of this too, and they store masses of sugar in swollen leaves (in the case of a bulb) or swollen stem (in the case of a corm, like garlic).



Early sowing ensures onions have the longest growing season possible and gives larger bulbs

### Transplanting

Once they have been thinned, keep them warm for another week and then put them into a greenhouse where the temperature is about 15C (60F). These are then ready to transplant about May time. I put some black plastic over the well dug and hoed ground to warm it.

Plant at about 15cm (6in) apart, with rows 30cm (12in) apart.

### Varieties

I never have any problems with 'Ailsa Craig' but try 'Macro' and for a red onion, try 'Red Baron'. 'Long Red Florence' is a great pickler – even though it is a funny shape.



'Ailsa Craig' is a good large bulb onion

### Sowing

Sow on the shortest day and harvest on the longest day, this has been the motto – especially for shallots, and most of the books say a room temperature of 15C (60F). Generally speaking, exhibitors sow at a much warmer 18-21C (65-70F), in trays, indoors.

The idea is to keep the seedlings warm, well ventilated and transplant them to their growing positions in soil that has had a chance to warm up. This means you can start your onions as early as November and have them in the tunnel bed in late January, where they will bulb up for late spring. Alternatively you can kick them off in January/February and have really decent specimens for planting out not much later in spring too.



1 Fill a seed tray with compost, level and firm

The reason for sowing as early as you can is that onion size is directly related to the number of leaves it produces. The more leaves the better the onion. Show onions are huge and have a reputation for having poor flavour. However, choosing the right variety, you can have good sized onions – not big enough to break any world records – that are simply great to eat.

Sow in trays, liberally, in good quality compost and do everything you can to stop them from becoming chilled. Water gently, don't get the seedlings wet, and water sparingly, otherwise you will get damping off.

As they grow, thin the onions to 2cm (3/4in) apart and let them grow – leave them alone. Simply add a little fertiliser to the water every now and again. Although they are packed with antibacterial chemicals they are prone to damping off, a fungal problem.



2 Sow the seeds liberally over the surface



3 Cover the seeds with compost or vermiculite

**DON'T  
FORGET**

■ Online you can see how to sow onions, shallots and leeks, and a discussion about the merits of sowing rather than planting sets. Visit: [www.kitchengarden.co.uk](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk)



# How much do you love me?



## This Much?

For just £1 a week, you can sponsor an abandoned dog like me today.



You'll be helping Dogs Trust give an abandoned dog who may never be rehomed a safe and happy life at one of their 17 Rehoming Centres. You'll also help thousands of other dogs who are cared for by Dogs Trust every year.

In return, you'll get a sponsor's certificate, updates on your dog – and unconditional love from your new friend. Now, isn't that a pound well spent?

## Yes, I'd love to sponsor a dog

visit [www.sponsoradog.org.uk](http://www.sponsoradog.org.uk)

Or complete this coupon:

☐ Please send me my FREE Sponsor a Dog pack today so I can choose a dog to sponsor.

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other

Address

Postcode

Tel Date of Birth



Reg. Charity Nos: 227523 & SC037843

853762  
Please post this form to:  
Sponsor a Dog, Dogs Trust,  
FREEPOST NAT11464,  
Northampton, NN3 6BR.  
No stamp required.



The Ultimate In Tunnel Greenhouses

Haygrove



"The Best  
Garden Tunnel  
I've Seen!"

Ron MacFarlane  
National Vegetable Society Judge



## "Get the New Year off to a great start with Haygrove!"

### Contact us for a copy of our New Brochure and DVD

- Smart Venting System allows air in, keeps insects out
- All galvanised steel structure & anchoring system
- Roll-up ventilation along both sides
- Unique woven plastic covers - strong enough to walk on!

Building on over 20 years experience as growers and tunnel manufacturers, Haygrove have designed a quality product incorporating unique characteristics previously only available to commercial growers. For further information please call us or visit our website.

**Tel: 0845 269 6395**  
(charged at local rate)

Haygrove Ltd • Redbank • Ledbury • Herefordshire HR8 2JL

[www.gardentunnels.co.uk](http://www.gardentunnels.co.uk)



# UNDERCOVER CROPPING

Growing in a polytunnel or greenhouse? Sue Stickland has all the information you need to help you get the best from your protected space

Sow crops such as radish, spinach and cutting salads directly in the polytunnel border



## February jobs

- Prepare beds with compost or well-rotted manure
- Dig in overwintering green manures
- Tidy, weed and water overwintering crops
- Open doors and vents whenever conditions allow
- Hand pollinate peach blossom
- Start sowing and planting

February brings the tipping point between winter and early spring – when the days become long enough and the sun strong enough to see plants undercover start to grow. It means serious sowing and planting can begin.

## Sow and plant

(\*seeds which need extra heat to germinate)

**Sow in pots or modules for planting out undercover:** Tomatoes\*, peppers\*, chillies\*, aubergines\*, spring onions\*, lettuce, kohlrabi, calabrese, sugar peas, summer cabbage, spring onions\*

**Sow in pots or modules for planting on veg plot:**

Onions\*, broad beans, early peas, celery\*, celeriac\*

**Sow direct undercover:** Radish, sugar peas, annual spinach, cutting salads (leaf lettuce, rocket, cress, oriental greens), carrots

**Plant undercover:** Early potatoes



Covering with clear polythene will warm the soil and help speedy germination

## Harvest

Winter salads (chicories, Oriental greens, lambs lettuce, claytonia, spring onions), spinach, chard, spring onions, parsley

## A colourful harvest

The cold weather has one advantage at least – it deepens the red/purple colour in overwintered leafy crops, so homegrown salads can look stunning. As well as red chicories, there are purple mizunas, purple pak choi and both plain and feathery red mustards ('Giant Red' and 'Red Frills'). If you haven't grown any of these this year, add a few to your sowing list for the autumn.



The colour of red chicory (top) and purple mizuna (above) deepens in the cold weather...



...they look stunning in winter salads





**Clean up overwintered crops – weed between them and remove diseased leaves before vigorous growth begins**

Don't be in a hurry to pull up any overwintering leafy crops, even if they look scrappy. Instead, remove diseased and yellowing leaves, and weed between plants while you have chance. They have had time to make strong root systems and should put on plenty of growth before bolting – much more than their spring sown counterparts – to give you several more weeks of harvesting.

## Sowing priorities

Warmth makes all the difference to seed germination, so make the most of any heated space. The tender crops which benefit most from early sowing are the slow-growing ones such as peppers, chillies and aubergines. Tomatoes can wait until the beginning of next month if necessary.

Large seeds such as peas can be 'pregerminated' indoors. Spread them thinly on moist paper towels in a flat plastic container, and put them in a warm place (around 18-20C/65-68F) – an airing cupboard is ideal. Check daily to make sure they are still moist. Once the tiny white roots start to emerge, sow them carefully in pots or the polytunnel border.



**Sow peppers and aubergines and place in a covered and heated propagator to germinate**

## Growing on

Remember that if you sow tender crops now, the seedlings will continue to need extra heat and good light to grow on. If you have no heat in your greenhouse or tunnel, a warm windowsill can accommodate a few but lack of all round light gives straggly plants. One possible solution is to put a grow light (one that mimics natural sunlight) over plant trays in a warm room (suppliers such as Two Wests & Elliot [www.twowests.co.uk](http://www.twowests.co.uk) or Harrod Horticultural [www.harrodhorticultural.com](http://www.harrodhorticultural.com) have ones that are easy to set up).

## Dig in green manures

Continue to prepare polytunnel and greenhouse beds, as the time for early summer planting is approaching fast. Green manures should be left to decompose for at least three weeks before any following crops are planted and longer if you are sowing direct. Undercover, this usually means digging them in during February or March. Cut off the foliage with shears first to make it easier. Water the prepared beds if they are dry, and cover them with polythene to keep in the moisture; clear polythene will also help to warm the soil.



**Digging in grazing rye sown in the border in October – it has made good growth overwinter**

## Water and ventilation

Once growth starts, so will the need for regular watering. If in doubt, push your fingers into the soil to see how wet it is beneath surface. Temperatures can rocket in the stronger sunshine this month too, so open doors and vents fully on warm bright days. Good air circulation helps prevent fungal diseases.

## Potatoes...

Plant early potatoes, spacing them 30-40cm (12-15in) apart each way. I usually cover the bed with a plastic sheet after planting to give them extra warmth, and leave it on until the shoots emerge. Alternatively plant in large pots, allowing one seed tuber per 20 litre pot.

## ...and sweet potatoes

Tubers of homegrown sweet potatoes kept overwinter can be coaxed into growth at the end of the month to provide shoots or 'slips' for propagation. Plant them just below the surface in pots of moist well-drained gritty compost, and put them somewhere hot indoors (20-30C/68-86F) – near a boiler or radiator, for example. Otherwise you can order slips through the post (eg from Thompson & Morgan [www.thompson-morgan.com](http://www.thompson-morgan.com)) for April/May delivery. Shop-bought tubers will sometimes also sprout, but they may not be a type that grows well in the UK and could carry disease.

## UNDERCOVER FRUIT CROPS

Plant any fruit trees or vines undercover before the end of this month if possible. In a traditional vine house, the vines are planted outside and the main stem (or 'rod') led inside through a hole in the brick wall – the roots can then take advantage of natural rainfall. If you are mimicking this in a modern greenhouse or polytunnel, avoid waterlogging by making sure that rain running from the roof is channeled away. Otherwise plant directly inside, and mulch to conserve water.

Hand pollinate the flowers of peaches and nectarines that bloom this month, as few pollinating insects will be around. Transfer the pollen from flower to flower every couple of days using a soft paintbrush.



**Pollinate peach blossom with a soft paintbrush**

## Moles and voles

The problem pests at this time of year are not usually the small insects but the large pests such as mice, voles and moles. Mice and voles are infamous for eating pea and bean seeds but they are also surprisingly fond of greens. They will cleanly nibble out the tender tasty hearts of spring cabbage or parsley, for example. Keep a close watch, because the damage isn't always easy to spot at first. As an alternative to trapping, I find putting Environmesh over the plants and tucking it well into the soil at the edges will keep these small rodents out.

Moles appreciate the warmer soils and ready source of worms undercover in early spring, and their tunneling can raise and crack the soil – enough to either bury seedlings or leave their roots high and dry. Various devices are reputed to deter these pests, from traditional mothballs to ultrasonic buzzers, and might be worth a try in the confined area of tunnel or greenhouse. Instead I usually rely on vigilantly firming the soil and watering around disturbed plants.



# YOU AND YOUR PLOT

We value readers' input into Kitchen Garden because this is your magazine – here are some more of your stories compiled by **Emma Rawlings**

## Have trowel will garden

Susan Edwards from Nordelph in Norfolk has been growing veg since she was knee high and the highlight of her season last year was cutting the asparagus – the first cut from a new bed!



Susan picks some delicious strawberries



Susan likes to use companion planting and grows flowers such as Californian poppies and pot marigolds near her veg



Susan grows a wide range of fruit, veg and flowers on her Norfolk-based plot

### Do you tend your plot on your own?

I tend my plot. I have a husband who likes to eat the produce grown, but he is not interested in growing it! He occasionally comes and sits on the bench in the veg plot, brings me a cup of tea, but that's it!

### How long have you been growing veg?

I have been growing veg since I was knee high. I would follow my father around the garden as he tended his veg patch. He would allow me to sow some seeds and help with weeding. He had to make sure I was pulling up weeds and not veg – and when the time was right, we would pull up the carrots, pick the peas or dig up the potatoes and eat half of them raw on the way to the kitchen. Mum was never very happy about that.

### Which crops have done exceptionally well for you over the past season?

I have tried growing lots of veg but unless you have acres and acres, I find it best to stick with what grows well for you with your soil/weather conditions and with what you know you like to eat. In my case this is runner beans, peas, spinach, beetroot, carrots, onions, chard, lettuce, radish, asparagus. I love strawberries so I have plenty of those as well as raspberries, gooseberries, tayberries and blueberries. I also have two grapevines and some rhubarb.

### What was the most challenging aspect of last season?

The weather proved very temperamental last year. Living on the Fens the wind can be a problem.

### Most troublesome pest or disease on your plot?

My plot wasn't affected much by munching or

gnawing insects. I do companion plant though and I swear this helps to keep my plot clear of pests and disease. I also plant so that, for example, onions grow near carrots to mask the smell of carrots to deter carrot fly.

### Best moment on your veg plot last season?

That was cutting my first asparagus spears. The bed was only recently established so I only picked a few spears but this year I will be able to pick, pick, pick! The spears I did eat were simply delicious – so much better than those bought in the supermarkets.

### One vegetable you would recommend to other kitchen gardeners?

Cut-and-come-again spinach is the veg I would recommend. It is so simple to grow and needs little attention, apart from making sure you pick the young tender leaves to encourage more to grow. Mine is grown in a raised bed and it came through last year's terrible winter without a problem. This was the first veg I was able to pick. It is delicious steamed and eaten with other vegetables, fish or meat. It can be stir-fried or added to curries. It is full of vitamins and it has a lovely dark colour when cooked. All in all, a very valuable vegetable which I think is far too under-rated.

### Have you got any tips that you could pass on to new veg gardeners?

If you can afford to buy raised beds, I would definitely grow my veggies in these, but you really need to have them double height if you want to grow veg other than salad stuff. Filled with good-quality top soil they give you an instant area in which to grow veg, even if the rest of your plot is

full of weeds. Obviously it helps to destroy as many weeds as possible where you intend placing your raised beds, but I would say double depth beds are easy to weed and do not need to be dug over and you don't have to bend so much. If you cannot afford to buy ready-made beds it is not difficult to make them yourself.

### If you could invite one famous person to have a cup of tea with you on your plot who would it be?

Jamie Oliver because he comes from Essex (me too!) He speaks Estuary speech (me too) and he is full of joy when growing his own.

### Most useful tool in your shed?

Hand trowel. I can do any job with this even digging over flower and veg borders although of course it will take much longer than using a spade and fork. However, mine is very comfortable to use, glides through the soil, is strong and sturdy and is easy to carry around.



A feast of strawberries, loganberries and tayberries all fresh from Susan's plot



## Gardening friends

Val Brown and Hazel Verbov share the work duties on their allotment in Liverpool and together have formed a great prize-winning team. Here's their story...



Val and Hazel with some of their winning trophies

### Do you tend your plot on your own?

I tend the plot with my friend Hazel who offered a 'bit of digging' when I took on my plot in 2008 and we have worked together ever since.

### How long have you been growing veg?

I have been growing vegetables, on a small scale, for as long as I can remember, but I have had my allotment since March 2008.

### Which crops have done exceptionally well for you over the past season?

It was a difficult dry summer last year but the peas and beans which were sown the previous autumn did well. The raspberries were good too – they obviously responded well to the harsh winter weather.

### What was the most challenging aspect of last season?

The long harsh winter delayed planting and eight consecutive weeks without a drop of rain did not help the root crops. Early leeks managed to find moisture but those planted later to fill gaps did not fare so well.

### Most troublesome pest or disease on your plot?

The plot has been reasonably pest and disease free. The dry weather deterred slugs, snails and rust diseases. There are plenty of wood pigeons around but I put net cages over vulnerable crops. I surround peas and beans with companion plants to attract beneficial insects. However, I have a major problem with mice eating my strawberries. I was looking forward to a bumper crop last year having invested in 24 new plants. The fruits were swelling nicely and then they just vanished. On investigation I discovered little heaps of under-ripe strawberries hidden beneath rhubarb leaves. The previous year the mice had my peas!

### Best moment on your veg plot last year?

Every moment is special on my plot. I love to see the first seed popping through the soil or harvesting the first new potatoes, waiting for the first cauliflower curd to form and saving seed for next season. I suppose a special moment was being informed that once again our plot had been chosen with four others on our field to enter the Liverpool Area Federation of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Competition. In our first year (2008) we were second in Liverpool and in 2009 we were joint first.

### One vegetable you would recommend to other kitchen gardeners?

I recommend brassicas and in particular the 'Hispi' cabbage. They are easy to grow and produce large, showy leaves in a relatively short space of time. A close second would be the 'Cylindra' beetroot as it is the perfect shape for slicing and pickling.

### Have you got any tips that you could pass on to new veg gardeners?

The best advice was given to me by Harry, a veteran allotment gardener on our field. "Use your hoe, always keep the soil moving." Another tip is to put shredded rhubarb in the planting holes under brassicas as it seems to help prevent clubroot.



The brassica beds with netting covers



The view of the plot showing the permanent planting bed in the foreground



The cucurbit bed with sweetcorn in the centre and edged with marigolds

### If you could invite one famous person to have a cup of tea with you on your plot who would it be?

I think it would have to be Carol Klein. When I first started my plot I carried Carol's book *Grow Your Own Veg* with me wherever I went. It is clearly set out and contains useful information. I was given a Carol Klein Garden Journal in 2009 and for the first time in my life I have kept a diary of weekly events on my plot. I have found it really useful referring back to the previous year when planning and planting. Carol would be the ideal choice as I am sure she would have a cup of tea and do a bit of weeding at the same time.

### Most useful tool in your shed?

The aforementioned hoe is indispensable but I like to use a paint-stripping knife when I am on my knees doing the delicate weeding between plants, it keeps edges tidy and is handy when extracting weeds from brick paths.



## The heritage plot

Andrew Carrier is a volunteer at a newly created heritage allotment at Elvaston Castle Country Park near Derby, where volunteers work together growing many old varieties

### Do you tend your plot on your own?

I am a volunteer at the allotment which is based in a walled garden which the public currently do not have access to. The allotment is co-ordinated by area ranger Derbyshire Countryside service, Richard Thomas. The park is run by Derbyshire County Council. The plot was prepared in the autumn of 2009 and the volunteers began sowing and planting for the first time in mid-April last year. The aim is to grow heritage vegetables from seed and bulbs/tubers. Initially we have sourced about three quarters of the crops in this way. The plots are tended by about six volunteers.

### How long have you been growing veg?

I have been growing veg for 37 years.

### Which crops have done exceptionally well for you over the past season?

Nearly all the crops are doing exceptionally well. We are particularly pleased with the peas (two different heritage varieties) plus root crops and brassicas. We have four raised beds and were really pleased with the heritage squash and ridge cucumbers that were planted in them.

### What was the most challenging aspect of last season?

Developing the skills and confidence of the volunteers who are new to veg growing especially with heritage varieties.

### Most troublesome pest or disease on your plot?

Rabbits which ate the asparagus peas. We net the brassica beds to protect plants from pigeons.

### Best moment on your veg plot last year?

On 20 June last year the park celebrated its 40th anniversary and the walled garden was opened to the public. We had a large number of visitors showing interest and enthusiasm for the project. They asked lots of questions about the crops etc but most of all expressing their positive appreciation for the plot and how well it was doing.

### One vegetable you would recommend to other kitchen gardeners?

At home for the last two seasons I have grown kale 'Cavolo de Nero'. It proved very hardy over the recent hard winter. It is a useful winter green and has unusual crinkled leaves giving an interesting feature in the brassica bed. I would not be without it.

### Have you got any tips that you could pass on to new veg gardeners?

- 1 To protect all brassicas from cabbage root fly, cut out a 3in square piece of roofing felt. Cut a slit in one side and then across the middle of that slit form a cross. Place brassica stems through the slit when planting, ensuring the felt square is flush with the surface of the soil.
- 2 Use cut comfrey leaves around gooseberry and blackcurrant bushes to give a natural potash boost in spring.
- 3 The 'man' tool cleaner is a simple wooden tool fashioned out of a hard wood about 5in long and 2in wide. It is used to remove mud from tools and was originally used by the Navvies who built the canals.

### If you could invite one famous person to have a cup of tea with you on your plot who would it be?

If he was still alive, Lawrence D Hills. I learnt gardening skills from his book *Grow Your Own Fruit and Vegetables*. His knowledge was enormous on everything from vitamin content of different veg to analysis of compost types to dealing with pests and diseases in the safest way to the environment. He was organic in his methods long before it became fashionable. It would be fun to swap experiences and would help with what to expect from different heritage veg types.

### Most useful tool in your shed?

My most valuable tool is for keeping my secateurs sharp. It's called Neat Ideas Garden Sharp. It's simple to use and very effective.



A general view of the plot last summer showing the netted brassica plot in the foreground



A view of the plot in early May



Raised beds of heritage squash and ridge cucumbers thrived last season



Andrew Carrier behind a root crop bed. Notice the tall leaves just in front of him which is a crop of Black Spanish Long radish. Andrew would have loved to share a cuppa with Lawrence D Hills



Andrew with the first beans on the 'Painted Lady' runner beans



**VAT  
↓ UP! ↓**  
We're keeping ours down!

**10%**  
**OFF\***  
**EVERYTHING**

\*See website for details. Must end 31st January 2011



**FIRST TUNNELS**  
*the growing season just got longer*

[www.FirstTunnels.co.uk](http://www.FirstTunnels.co.uk)  
[Sales@FirstTunnels.co.uk](mailto:Sales@FirstTunnels.co.uk)  
or call 01282 601253



[www.facebook.com/polytunnels](http://www.facebook.com/polytunnels)  
[www.twitter.com/firsttunnels](http://www.twitter.com/firsttunnels)  
[www.youtube.com/polytunnels](http://www.youtube.com/polytunnels)





# Parsnips

## Rooting for success



Parsnips can be the easiest of crops to grow or the hardest. Follow **Andrew Tokely's** guide and be assured of some roasted roots to go with your Christmas dinner this year



**W**hen making a list of winter vegetables to grow, parsnips always feature very high on mine. A few roasted and added to our Christmas lunch is something I look forward to every year.

If you want to enjoy a few at this year's lunch which seems a long way off, then you need to get that seed ordered as it won't be long before they require sowing. Parsnips need a long growing season and are often one of the first vegetables to sow, but the last to harvest.

Many plot holders I know have tried growing them and over time given up to lack of success either in germination or the quality of the roots harvested, which is a pity because in my experience a little care and attention in the beginning will reward you with a bountiful harvest.



Sweet roasted parsnips are a true winter favourite

### Parsnips at a glance

Light green = Possible to harvest/sow Dark green = best time to harvest/sow

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sow												
Harvest												



## TOP TIP

- Always buy a new packet of parsnip seeds each year, as, like carrot seed, it deteriorates if over 12 months old resulting in very poor germination. Thin out seedlings in the evening when it is cooler to avoid seedling stress, and water them in after thinning to settle any soil disturbance.

## Ground Preparation

Parsnips along with all root vegetables do not require a very rich soil, but do benefit from ground which was deeply dug in the winter to help with root development throughout the year. One thing that must be avoided is sowing seed into ground that has recently had manure added to it. This is because parsnips grown on freshly manured ground usually produce roots that are forked and disfigured. I usually try to grow my parsnips on ground on which I grew peas or beans the previous year, as these vegetables will have added nitrogen to the soil, so enriching it.

Prior to sowing the soil requires raking down to a fine tilth, with as many stones removed as possible. Once the soil is prepared, I sprinkle some fertiliser in to the ground and gently rake it into the surface.



For best results the long roots of parsnips require a deep, free-draining soil

## TOP TIP

- Avoid sowing seed into freshly manured ground otherwise the roots may become forked or disfigured. Seeds germinate best in soil that has a minimum temperature of 7C (45F).



## Sowing the seeds

Traditionally before hybrid varieties were freely available parsnips were always sown in February, and sometimes with limited success due to poor conditions. Now with modern varieties that are full of vigour, sowing can be delayed until April or even early May and you will still get a good crop.

Many gardeners sow their parsnip seeds into shallow drills that have been drawn out with a swan neck hoe. Parsnips can take up to eight weeks to germinate, allowing plenty of time for weeds to grow and make seedling identification difficult. To help with this problem I like to sow a few radish seeds along the rows at the same time as these will germinate quicker and help me identify the rows more easily when hoeing in between them. Once the drills have been sown they are lightly covered and once germinated the seedlings are thinned to 15cm (6in) apart. This method of growing parsnips is OK if you are not worried about the quality or length of the root you harvest.



Alternating radishes with parsnip seeds helps to mark the rows – and gives you a bonus crop!

However if you want better quality, longer roots for eating or exhibition then you could try the method I now use. First I punch a hole in the ground with a crowbar about 45-60cm (18-24in) deep. This is then filled with multi-purpose compost that has had a little sand added to it. As the holes are filled they are firmed down with a stick to avoid air pockets, then three or four seeds are sown at the top and covered over.



Andrew fills the holes he has made in the soil with compost to which sand has been added

Once germinated these will be thinned down to one parsnip per hole and should grow long and straight.

I explained my method of growing to fellow plot holder Charles Heath, who grew one row sown direct as he has always done, and one row punched in the ground using my method. When he harvested the roots, those from the punched holes were long and straight and those from the rows sown direct were quite disfigured.



Fellow plotholder Charles Heath tried Andrew's method of sowing parsnips last year. The root on the left was direct sown, the one on the right was sown into bore holes



## Growing mini parsnips

Mini baby vegetables have really increased in popularity during recent years including parsnips. To grow mini parsnips you must first choose the correct varieties which have been bred to quickly produce small roots. Mini parsnips can be sown in succession from the end of April to mid June and you will be amazed at how quickly they germinate. Unlike normal parsnips these can be grown on a closer spacing of 5-7cm (2-3in) apart.

Seeds for baby roots could be sown in the plot or into deep containers filled with multi-purpose compost and will be ready to harvest as soon the mini bayonet roots are large enough to pull, which is usually in late July or August when they will be tender and sweet to eat.

## Growing on

Once the seeds have germinated, and the seedlings have the two seed leaves plus two true leaves they are ready for thinning out. I like to leave the strongest seedling in each station. Some gardeners thin their parsnips by pulling out the weakest seedlings and leaving the strongest, but I do not like this method, as it can disturb the remaining seedling. If this is disturbed it will often fork or become misshapen, or even worst wither and die. The method I use for thinning my parsnips is to nip the seedlings I don't want off at the base with my nails, leaving the strongest seedling undisturbed. The small piece of hair like root left in the ground from the unwanted seedlings will just wither and disappear. Doing it this way means that there is no chance of disturbing the remaining parsnip and you should be rewarded with a straight root of good size.

Through the spring and summer keep the hoe moving around your parsnips to keep them weed free, along with hand weeding close to the roots, so the shoulders are not accidentally touched and marked from the hoe. Any damage to the shoulders may encourage canker disease to start.

I like to keep the rows of parsnips watered regularly at least once a week, especially through hot, dry weather, because if the soil dries out then becomes very wet again it will often cause roots to split or crack.



By the beginning of June, the young plants are growing away strongly



Soak parsnip roots thoroughly prior to lifting

## Harvesting

The lifting of large parsnip roots can start from September onwards, as soon as roots are large enough to eat. The best method for lifting is to dig down beside the roots with a fork or spade, exposing the root before gently lifting the roots out without damage. If lifting extra long roots from punched in holes, first dig down beside the parsnip and fill the hole with water, leave until the water has drained away then gently pull the foliage and wiggle the root at the same time and it should come out clean.

## Pest and diseases

The main disease of parsnips is fungal disease called canker. Several species of fungus give rise to it and it can only be prevented by not damaging the roots while growing (for example when hoeing), or by growing a canker resistant variety. Canker usually attacks hoe damaged or weak roots first. It may also attack roots that have been sown into soil that is deficient of lime or is poorly drained.

Parsnips can occasionally be attacked by carrot fly so growing under fleece or crop protection netting such as Enviromesh and thinning when cool in the evenings will help prevent this. During very warm springs aphids can be a problem feeding on the soft young growth, if spotted and the infestations is severe I spray with a suitable insecticide.



Parsnips are usually left in the ground until required to eat, but if you want to lift roots to allow the ground to be cleared and dug, I have found a method of storing them outside. First carefully lift them, clean the top foliage off, then dig a shallow trench that is slightly on a slope and lay the parsnips in the trench upside down, so the root tip is just poking out of the top of the trench. Then refill the trench with soil, still leaving the tips of the roots poking out. By storing them in this way you can easily lift a parsnip from the shallow trench whatever the weather without any heavy digging.



Parboil parsnips, coat in a beaten egg, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and roast in the oven until golden. Simply delicious!

## Andrew's pick of the varieties

**'Tender & True':** A traditional variety with good canker resistance, capable of producing long, flavoursome roots.

**'Gladiator F1':** One of the first hybrids and still one of the best. Long smooth-skinned roots with good canker resistance. Excellent for the kitchen or exhibition. Hybrids such as 'Gladiator' can be sown later in the season and still give a good crop

**'Excalibur F1':** Smooth almost bleached white roots with a very sweet flavour. Capable of making a good weight with excellent canker resistance.

**'Dagger':** Smooth-skinned tender roots ideal for growing as mini parsnips at close spacings.



The pure white roots of 'Excalibur'



'Dagger' is a great variety for mini roots





THE FINEST GLASSHOUSES MONEY CAN BUY

HARTLEY BOTANIC



NOTHING ELSE IS A HARTLEY

For our **CURRENT OFFERS** call or click **0800 783 8083** [www.hartley-botanic.co.uk](http://www.hartley-botanic.co.uk) [kg@hartleybotanic.co.uk](mailto:kg@hartleybotanic.co.uk)

# WINTER SALE

WE'LL PAY THE 2.5% VAT INCREASE **PLUS** UP TO 30% OFF





# Tried and tasted... Courgettes

In his new series, award-winning gardening writer **Joe Maiden** takes an in-depth look at a popular crop each month. Here he puts courgettes under the spotlight



Courgettes are one of the easiest crops to grow and a great subject for beginners to start with. All they need is a little heat in the early stages to get them started and once well established can be planted out into well prepared soil as described below when, with a little care, they can be harvested right up until the first frosts. I tried eight varieties last year to see which were the best for flavour and reliability on my sunny Yorkshire plot. I chose an open site which is well protected on both sides by big hedges. The patch is on a sunny south facing slope which proved to be an ideal growing area for this very quick-growing vegetable crop. The hedges framing the plot are far enough away not to have not caused any shade.

## Ground preparation

My site has about 36cm (14in) of good top soil upon a reasonably well drained subsoil. Assuming your soil is like mine and reasonably fertile, first dig out a hole approximately 60cm (2ft) square and 36cm (14in). Then fork through the base of the hole to alleviate any poor drainage. Make the planting holes about 1m (3ft 3in) apart. To each planting hole add one barrowful of well-rotted manure. Alternatively use garden compost or well rotted mushroom compost. When filling the hole filter in one forkful of manure then some soil then some manure and so on. Avoid a solid layer of manure as this can sometimes rot the roots.

When you place the soil back onto the manure scatter in some slow-release sheep manure pellets to further enrich the soil. Pelleted chicken manure or Growmore could be used instead. By the time the manure and soil has gone back in the hole you will have a mound approximately 45cm (18in) above ground level. If you can, prepare your planting station six weeks before you want to plant out, this allows the soil to settle back with the manure and at planting time the mounds will be the correct degree of firmness for planting. Don't forget to apply a general fertiliser to the adjacent area around the planting area and fork in, but this can be done seven to 10 days prior to planting.

To each planting hole add one barrowful of well-rotted manure. Alternatively use garden compost or well-rotted mushroom compost





Sow seeds on their edge and pointed end first in cell trays or small pots

## Sowing your crop

I live in North Yorkshire and the correct sowing time in my area is at the end of April or early May. It takes me three to four weeks from sowing to have a plant at the perfect stage to plant out, always bearing in mind courgettes are on the tender side, not liking cold nights.

Courgette seed is quite large, so it is easy to handle. I like to sow my seeds into cell trays – 15 cells per tray. Using a good multi-purpose compost, fill the trays and tap the full tray on the bench to firm in the compost before watering well.

Do not sow courgettes seed flat as sometimes water may lodge on the seed causing it to rot. Rather, sow the seed on its edge, pointed end downwards so that the water runs away off the seed. Bury 13mm (½in) deep. The seed trays can then be placed on a heated propagating mat or heated propagator, set at between 13 and 15C (55-60F). Within five or six days germination should have taken place at which time you can remove the trays from the heat and grow on in the greenhouse, making sure they are in a warm, light position where the night temperature falls no lower than 4.5C (40F). Ventilate well during the day.

Try to keep your plants sturdy – courgette plants grow very quickly; I transfer from the module trays to 13cm (5in) pots 10 days after sowing. When the pots are full of roots and if weather conditions permit, they can be planted out. Place them in a well-ventilated cold frame prior to planting to harden them off thoroughly.

## Planting out

Water the plants well the night before planting. Make a depression twice the size of the rootball in the well prepared mounds, backfill and firm them in well before watering in. Now the magic touch – to keep slugs at bay I like to make a circle around the plants using pelleted sheep manure (SlugGone). The hygroscopic nature of the wool fibres in the pellets absorbs some of the slime underneath the slug's foot, drying it out and deterring it from crossing the barrier. When the barrier weathers it acts as slow release plant food. There is another ploy I use because courgettes make big plants, fast-growing with a great leaf spread. After a few weeks it is impossible to gauge where to water, so I sink in a section of drainpipe about one foot away from the plant. I then know where the root system is so I can water down the pipe. You could use a cut down drinks bottle instead. Courgettes love plenty of water in midsummer when they are producing well. If it becomes cold after planting, protect them for a few days with cloches, even an upturned bucket at night. Planting on a mound helps to prevent stem rot.



Planting on a mound aids drainage. Allow 1m (3ft 3in) between plants



Eight varieties were put on trial last year and all proved to be highly productive

## Varieties on trial

The varieties I tried last year included three long yellow varieties, two round yellow varieties and three long green types. I planted four plants of each variety for my trial and to maintain optimum cropping I harvested the fruit twice a week.



Fruit was harvested twice a week and the yield from each plant recorded

## THE RESULTS

### Yellow-fruited varieties

These included 'Taxi', 'Goldrush' and 'Golden Zucchini', all long-fruited types.

'Taxi': I found this to be an extremely heavy cropper. They started to crop well in early June, but the peak cropping time was during July, August and September. The courgettes were cut very young when approximately when 13-15cm (5-6in) long, the quality was extremely good and the flavour excellent.



Yellow-fruited 'Taxi' proved to be a heavy cropper

'Goldrush': Plants produced attractive green foliage with silver splashes over the leaves. Again these courgettes were cut very young and proved to have good quality and flavour.



'Goldrush' had pronounced and attractive silver splashes on the leaves





The slender fruits of 'Golden Zucchini'

'Golden Zucchini': Produced glossy bright yellow fruits which were very slender in shape. A prolific producer with excellent flavour.

Overall results of the trial of these yellow courgettes was excellent, I obviously chose a brilliant season – 'Goldrush' was my favourite for flavour with 'Golden Zucchini' not far behind. Towards the end of the season I just let the courgettes develop and I had an enormous crop of yellow marrows.

### Round-fruited varieties

Now for the round varieties and I chose 'Floridor F1' and 'One Ball F1'. Both these varieties produced an almost identical pattern of growth, weight of fruit, appearance and flavour. I found the growth quite hard to control and one other problem was the way the fruit developed from the centre of the plant in an upright direction. This often made it difficult to get the knife into the cluster of fruit to be able to harvest them. Both these varieties averaged approximately 80 fruits per plant, and they proved to be a real novelty vegetable in the garden with visitors fascinated by them.

At the end of the season I let all the plants develop and everyone said what a marvellous set of pumpkins I had!



'One Ball' caused quite a stir on the plot. It was tasty but not the easiest to harvest

All courgettes need is a little heat in the early stages to get them started and once they are established they can be planted out into well prepared soil when, with a little care, they can be harvested right up until the first frosts

### Green-fruited varieties

The three green varieties I chose to grow were 'Ambassador', 'Defender F1', and 'Parthenon F1'.

'Ambassador': I have grown this variety for years and it is always one of the first courgettes on my seed list. It produces very early fruits, dark green with an excellent flavour. The fruit was easy to pick and attained the size of 13-15cm (5-6in) three days from flowering.

'Defender F1': An extremely heavy cropper with a fantastic habit towards the end of the season when it almost develops trailing growth. The plants were extremely heavy cropping and the flavour was very good. I will definitely grow this variety again as it won three first prizes at shows for me in the courgette classes last year; the courgettes were so uniform that it was very easy to find three matching fruit.

'Parthenon F1': This F1 hybrid is a true season long variety and as well as being uniform, the courgettes have good flavour. Three plants of this variety cropped about 100 courgettes and an extremely good plant cropped 120.



One of the heaviest and tastiest crops came from 'Defender F1'

### Courgette trial results

Variety	Plant 1	Plant 2	Plant 3	Plant 4
'Taxi'	86	94	80	72
'Goldrush'	36	41	47	52
'Golden Zucchini'	103	86	89	92
'Floridor F1'	80	82	79	78
'One Ball F1'	83	77	80	79
'Ambassador'	87	73	84	86
'Defender F1'	103	94	76	84
'Parthenon F1'	120	100	98	96

The visitors to my nursery were sick of the sight of courgettes as I was handing them out by the bucketful twice a week. Any of the courgettes that escaped my eye on cutting day had developed into large marrows by the time I came to harvest them again!

- See page 93 for details of seed suppliers





# R. V. Roger Ltd

Nurserymen since 1913

The North of England's  
leading grower of Orchard Fruit,  
Soft Fruit and Nut Trees



One of the widest ranges of  
heritage and modern  
varieties in the UK, grown on  
both dwarfing and vigorous  
rootstocks. Cordon, espalier  
and fan-trained trees a  
speciality

New 2011  
Seed and Potato  
List  
now available



Traditional family-run nursery, with the emphasis on  
plant quality and first class customer service

The Nurseries, Pickering  
North Yorkshire YO18 7JW  
Tel: 01751 472226



Phone now for your free catalogue or shop on-line at ...  
**www.rvroger.co.uk**

# PREMIER BULLDOG



The Bulldog Premier  
Range of Garden  
Tools is the No.1  
choice for the  
professional  
landscaper and  
discerning gardener  
where solid forged  
strength, quality and  
ease of use are of  
paramount  
consideration.

These exceptionally  
strong tools are hand  
made by our  
skilled craftsmen at  
our factory in Wigan,  
England.



## The Strongest Handles and Shafts

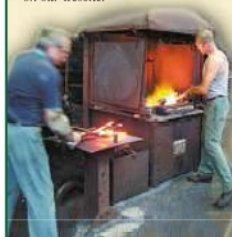
Our handles and shafts are  
made from the finest  
sustainable Ash. The timber  
is carefully chosen for  
quality and straightness of  
grain. Each shaft is then  
varnished for  
weather  
protection.

200 YEARS  
OF HAND FORGED  
ENGLISH  
GARDEN TOOLS

## The Strongest Heads & Sockets

Bulldog Heads and Sockets are  
solid forged from a single piece of  
steel for exceptional strength.  
The absence of welding eliminates  
points of weakness.

See how Bulldog Tools are  
made - visit the Factory Tour  
on our website.



01279 401572

For the complete range of Bulldog Garden Tools and Stockists visit:  
**bulldogtools.co.uk**



# CH. WHITEHOUSE Ltd.

Manufacturers of quality greenhouses  
& garden buildings since the 1920's

- Garden Frames – more  
space for your plants
- Durable natural Western  
Red Cedar – hence very  
low maintainance
- Traditional  
designs to meet  
the needs of  
today's gardener
- Individually constructed  
to the highest standards

Look  
forward to  
Spring



For further information on our full range  
and services, please telephone or fax

**01892 750247**

or visit our website at:

**www.greenhouse.uk.net**



We had the seed of an idea  
To develop a superior growing  
environment for the  
serious gardener



The alternative to glass

**CLM Keder  
Greenhouses Limited**

Newtown  
Offenham  
Evesham

Worcestershire WR11 8RZ

Telephone 01386 49094

**www.kedergreenhouse.co.uk**

Keder is a  
3-layer plastic  
sandwich with 1,000  
bubbles per square meter



# VEG PLOT ANSWERS

## Contaminated manure

**Q** We had a load of cow manure delivered to our allotments which turned out to be contaminated with chemicals, the effects were distorted and poor crops of potatoes, indoor tomatoes, stunted runner beans and poor yields of brassicas. We were unable to trace the source as the manure had been clamped for two years and the reliable supplier of the manure was unable to recall whether the cattle were fed any fodder that might come from sprayed grassland. Having spoken to various people like Defra we were told the likely chemicals involved were Grazeon and Forlan, and if we mixed the manure with soil by rotovating/digging it should be okay in the spring but we would like to know if anyone will test the soil to remove any doubt for the 2011 season.

*Derek Keen, by email*

**A** Emma says: There is an allotment group that have been at the forefront of the campaign to deal with this problem and their website is [www.allotment.org.uk](http://www.allotment.org.uk) On this site is a huge amount of information on this contamination problem. Professional testing can be very expensive and it is actually very simple to test it yourself by simply growing some tomato seedlings in the manure. Use a 50:50 manure and compost mix and make sure the manure is chopped up finely and mixed well. If the plant shows the distorted leaves typical of hormonal weedkiller damage then you know you have the problem. You could test the manure now and grow some tomato seedlings on a windowsill. The light levels are not good at this time of year but you should get enough growth to hopefully see if the toxin is still there. There is more on the website to explain what to do with the manure if it is still contaminated.



## Star letter winner!

The writer of our top query each month will receive a biological control pack from Nemasys including a pack of Vine Weevil Killer AND Nemaslug. For more information and ordering your own biological controls visit [www.nemasysinfo.com](http://www.nemasysinfo.com) or email [info.uk@beckerunderwood.com](mailto:info.uk@beckerunderwood.com)

## Pest on leeks

**Q** In the December issue you reproduced my photograph and I thank you for answering the question about tatty leeks. Next year I will use Enviromesh as you suggested to keep out the leek moth. I also noticed the leeks had shrivelled ends and stunted growth so could this also be due to the leek moth or another disease such as white tip? I kept the stronger leeks and they seemed to recover a little when I cut the tops but not enough to produce a normal crop. I have always grown 'Musselburgh' but do you think it would help if I treated the plot with Jeyes Fluid and then changed to one of the new disease-resistant varieties such as Sultan F1?



*John Bolden, Chichester, West Sussex*

**A** Steve says: It is possible the damage to the leaf structure further down has caused the dieback or 'white tips' at the end of the leaf blades but it could equally be a secondary fungal infection. These infections can be worse in certain weather conditions and this is why some years you may see a disease that is particularly prevalent but another year it could be less of a problem.

There are no fungal sprays you can use to prevent diseases on leeks but crop rotation and changing your varieties may help in some cases. Treating the plot with Jeyes Fluid is not recommended and you could do more harm than good.

## When to top the fruit cage?

**Q** I had to take the top off my fruit cage because of heavy snow weighing it down. When should I replace it?

*H Jeffries, by email*

**A** Steve says: This is a tricky one because at this time of year snow is a probability in some areas and as you have found out snow can build up on the net roof and either rip the roof or worse bend the supporting side poles. It is also at this time of year the buds are beginning to swell and just the perfect time for birds, especially bullfinches, to start feeding on them. You have to weigh up the risks and it depends on what fruit you have growing in the cage.





### Will figs ripen?

**Q** I have a small fig tree and it has quite a bit of fruit on it but someone has told me the largest fruits won't go on to mature now. Is that right?

*Mrs Knight, by email*

**A** Emma says: If you have figs on your tree which are larger than thumbnail size now then they will not survive to grow to maturity and can be rubbed off. Leave any pea sized fruit as these will be fine and go on to produce the summer's harvest.



### Leaf miner a problem

**Q** I read with interest your article (December) on tatty leeks caused by the leek moth, and having tended an allotment for 40 plus years, thankfully, I have not experienced this problem. However, in December 2003 an outbreak of the allium leaf miner was discovered in Wolverhampton.

The whole of our allotment is now badly affected, and unless one covers the newly planted leeks with mesh or fine netting, every layer of the leek develops brown streaks and a small brown bug is clearly visible rendering the leek inedible. Last year, my son's allotment 30 miles away at Ludlow developed the same problem.

I would be interested to know how the commercial growers are overcoming this problem. Covering such a large growing area would seem impractical, and it's not 100 per cent effective

*Norman Humpage, by email*

**A** Emma says: I might be wrong but I believe this has not been a major problem for commercial growers, YET! I believe they may have access to certain pesticides, although from my research it appears they don't have many, ioxynil being one, but again I could be wrong and I am not even sure if this would be effective against this particular pest. Leaf mining pests are notoriously difficult to control unless the pesticide is systemic and travels through the leaf in the sap. I would be interested to hear from any commercial leek growers on this matter.

### Digging the plot

**Q** I didn't get round to digging over the veg plot in early autumn. Is it all right to do this now, I won't damage the soil structure will I?

*Mrs L Wilson, by email*

**A** Emma says: It is fine to dig over the soil now as long as conditions are right. It is best to avoid trampling the soil when it is too wet, besides it won't be easy to dig in these conditions anyway. After a few days of dry weather you should be able to turn the soil over well depending on what soil type you have. Heavy clay is a difficult soil to work and you will often find there is a perfect time to dig the soil in the autumn or early spring but the rest of the time it is either baked hard or a sticky mess! If the weather is fine try some digging and if the soil turns over well, doesn't stick to the spade unduly and leaves good clods of earth then carry on digging. In theory the winter rains and frosts will break down the larger chunks of earth making the soil more crumbly in the spring when you come to rake it down. Winter digging also opens up the ground to allow good penetration of water and exposes pests which will be snapped up by the birds.



### Storing fruit in the fridge

**Q** I have recently had to buy a new upright fridge/freezer and have heard of people storing fruit in old fridges so I wondered how it is done? Without power, with door slightly open, top and bottom compartment also for apples beetroot etc. I wish to use it without power for apples mainly, but also beetroot and anything else that comes along. Could you please advise.

*Alan Fox by email*

**A** Steve says: You could store fruit and veg in the fridge if it is placed in a cool place such as shed or garage. However, as you rightly said you need to keep the door ajar to let some air in or you get anaerobic conditions and the first thing that will happen is the taste will be affected and then they will rot. The only problem with keeping the door slightly open is the danger of rodents getting in but if you could put a mesh across this should prevent them entering. Beetroot is traditionally placed in trays of sand and this is still a good way to store them even in a fridge. If they are piled up touching each other they will be more prone to rot. The apples and pears could be placed on shelving with slight gaps between them.



### GOT A GARDENING QUERY?

Then send the KG team your question and if possible include a picture or send us a sample of the produce affected. We can't promise to answer or publish every query but we will do our best. Send to: Veg Plot Answers, Kitchen Garden, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR or email Emma: [erawlings@mortons.co.uk](mailto:erawlings@mortons.co.uk)



# LETTERS AND TIPS

**Write to:** Letters, Kitchen Garden, Mortons Media Group, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle LN96JR or email Emma: [erawlings@mortons.co.uk](mailto:erawlings@mortons.co.uk)



## Best tasting carrots ever

I'm so glad there are so many schemes and projects to encourage children to garden. My three-year-old son, Sam, grew these carrots from free seeds offered by Cbeebies. As you can see he is very proud and says they taste the best too.

*Katy Gee, Gunnislake, Cornwall*

## Star letter winner!

The writer of our monthly star letter will receive vouchers worth £20 to spend in the latest catalogue from Mr Fothergill's seeds (your catalogue will be sent with the vouchers). For more information on Mr Fothergill's range tel: 0845 166 2511 or visit [www.fothergills.co.uk](http://www.fothergills.co.uk)



## Wasp attack on grapes

I have read the article in the September issue of Kitchen Garden on how to grow grapes. I have a grapevine in my garden which grows over a wooden arch. It has been reliably growing for the last 20 years, having been planted there in the flower bed. Wasps love to eat grapes as they ripen. This seems to happen every year. One year we

looked at the lovely bunches of grapes in the morning then after returning from work in the evening we went to look at them again and they had been munched back to the stalks and no grapes were left on the vine. Has anybody else had this problem and what can be done to deter the wasps?

*Lacey Dent, Leighton Buzzard, Beds*



## Top tomato tip

Spray your tomato plants in the morning of a sunny day. This will encourage the flowers to set and to produce more fruit. Do not spray the plants on a dull or overcast day as it will encourage diseases on the plants and fruit.

*Stephen Oakes, by email*



## The old sayings are the best

Forget all those expensive potions sold in your local garden centre. My father, a keen gardener all his life, and now well in his eighties used to have this little saying.

"The best soil conditioner, still unmatched is a good strong arm with a spade attached".

*Carol Cason, Stroud, Glos*

## And more wise words...

Don't be too despondent if it rains one day and you can't get out in the garden. Gardeners need some rainy days just so that they can get some housework done!

*Barbara Down, Tiverton*



## Chill out, it's winter!

I enjoy my little veg patch even at this time of year. It looks so bare apart from the odd patch of broccoli and leeks but it is slumbering and resting and it means I get a rest too. I'm lucky that my plot is small and the digging that needed to be done is all finished. It's a pity we can't all work with the seasons more and take the winter time to relax and enjoy the quiet and stillness of the plot and the surrounding countryside. Instead of seeing the wet, the dullness and feeling the cold, we should see it as a time for doing very little and enjoy that quiet contemplative

time. Instead people just try and charge around at the same pace as they do in the summer months even if it's snowy and icy when it is actually too dangerous to continue at the same speed. We should take a leaf out of nature's book and take it a bit more easy in winter. If we did that we would enjoy the season so much more, probably stay healthier and even look forward to it every year. Perhaps normal day working hours should reflect the day length too, so 9.30am-3.30pm should be the standard hours.

*Joyce Keening, by email*



## In a twist

I thought you might like to see a photograph of my political carrots. I call them that because they are full of twists 'n' turns. It's one carrot but turned around itself, although at first sight it does appear to be two separate roots. It was a devil to clean and prepare!

*Mick Borman,  
Dover, Kent*



## Stoat alert

Just before I read the article on chickens in the December issue, I had found my five hens all dead in the run. They had not been eaten, but all had identical bite marks on the backs of their necks. We live in North Yorkshire and with the increase in the rabbit population have noticed a consequent increase in stoats, who have become very visible and seem to live in and around the stone walls. We have concluded that this damage was done by a stoat. It could not get them out of the run, although it had prised up a corner of wire and we think escaped that way. So this is just a warning, even if you think you have made your hen house/run predator-proof from foxes and the like, stoats need only the very smallest gap to wriggle through and are particularly agile.

We will have to start again – my husband is particularly annoyed as he built a very fine house cum run for them with lots of room and several storeys...but we had not thought of stoats.

*Judith Warren, North Yorkshire.*



The stoat's main diet is rabbits and other small mammals



# READERS' EXCHANGE

Ask for help from other readers or offer your solutions

## Where can I get hold of butterbean seeds?

HELP

My family and I just love butterbeans which we buy in tins from our local shop. I would like to grow these myself so can anyone tell me where to buy butterbean seeds?

*Mr R G Wilce, Bristol*

## Good herb supplier

In answer to Peter Harford's enquiry (KG January) about good herb suppliers – Norfolk Herbs (01362 860812) are growers and suppliers of naturally raised culinary, medicinal and aromatic herb plants. I'm lucky enough to live a short drive away and highly recommend them. Well worth a visit.

*Claire Willis by email*

REPLY



## Reader Poll results

Take part in our reader polls on the home page of the Kitchen Garden website [www.kitchengarden.co.uk](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk)

We asked you which veg had performed best for you during the 2010 season? You told us:

**Potatoes 22%, carrots 9%, peas/beans 25%, brassicas 10%, tomatoes 34%.**

## Pruning autumn raspberries

REPLY

In reply to Jason Peppit (KG January 2011) regarding when to prune autumn-fruiting raspberries. February is the best time to prune back autumn-fruiting types. Cut the stems back to ground level. In early summer if there is a lot of growth these can be thinned out a little at this stage removing some of the spindly stems.

*Mr T Simmons, by email*



Kitchen Garden ONLINE – Join the debate on [www.kitchengarden.co.uk](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk)

## Tea anyone?

Apparently The Tregothnan Estate in Cornwall has recently pioneered commercial tea production in Cornwall and is making available a limited quantity of plants. These bushes (picture right) are apparently normally cultivated in tropical and sub-tropical climates with high rainfall but have now been established growing successfully in the UK. To grow the plants you must have soil that is acidic; the more acidic the soil, the better the tea. The ideal pH is 4.5-6.5 so planting the bush in a pot with ericaceous compost is perfect. The plant needs to be moved to a sheltered position or cool greenhouse in winter and must have protection from frost. I'm wondering if anybody has ever tried growing tea in this country before?

*Primrose, Bucks*

I had a tea plant for years, growing in a pot. It's from the same family as the camellia. I even made tea from the new shoots. It was a bit of a faff but the resulting brew was quite pleasant. If you can grow camellias in the garden, then no

problem. If not, as has been stated, grow them in a pot with the correct compost. The plant looks very similar to the ornamental camellia. Easy to grow. I grew mine about 15 years ago (in Dorset) so it's not a new venture.

*Diane, Dorset*

I've thought about getting a tea plant since I saw that they could be grown in the UK. One might be OK in the conservatory over winter. I've just had a look at the Plants4presents website and they have some very pretty *Camellia sinensis* (tea plants) in a 3-litre pot for £29. You get to choose a free container and gift card to go with it. Tempted?

*Plumpudding, S Yorks*

## Comfrey has many uses

Comfrey makes a good liquid fertiliser, but there are other uses. Comfrey makes a good compost activator – layered in with other things it helps to heat up and speed up decomposition. Use comfrey as a mulch where you are planting fruit bushes, runner beans, tomatoes etc, layer on the



soil top with grass clippings and let the worms take it down into the soil while you are conserving moisture. (But not around acid-loving plants as it produces an alkaline residue.) Added to leafmould it produces a nutrient-rich liquid absorbed by the leafmould. Add to potting and seed composts. Put comfrey in potato trenches. Layer wilted comfrey, cover with a little soil and plant potatoes. In trials comfrey worked better than proprietary fertilisers for potatoes!

*Nature's Babe, East Sussex*



# THE ORIGINAL AND BEST Marshall's Gro-Kit™

## The Easy Way to Grow Potatoes

From  
ONLY

£8.95\*

\*2 Kits or More + P&P



**FIRST  
EARLY**  
Swift



**SALAD**  
Charlotte



**SECOND  
EARLY**  
Maris Peer

### Now Includes **FREE** Fertiliser and **FREE** Chitting Tray!

**3 GRO-SACKS™ + 15 TUBERS**, 5 each  
of Swift, Charlotte and Maris Peer  
for a longer cropping period.

Designed by gardeners, Marshall's Potato Gro-Kits are the easiest way to grow potatoes if space in your garden or allotment is limited. Our 3 variety Taster Kit will give you a bumper crop of new potatoes in as little as 7 weeks, with salad potatoes and second early to follow. Each kit now comes with **FREE Marshall's Specialist Potato Fertiliser** and a **FREE Chitting Tray!**

- ✓ **EVERYTHING INCLUDED** – plus FREE fertiliser, just add compost and water
- ✓ **NO SPACE? NO PROBLEM** – perfect for terraces, patios, decking and balconies
- ✓ **THE EASIEST WAY TO GROW POTATOES** – no digging required
- ✓ **SUCCESS GUARANTEED** – just follow the simple instructions

**Swift** – The earliest we have seen, a good crop of waxy, white potatoes with a delicate new potato taste in as little as 7 weeks.

**Charlotte AGM** – Our favourite salad potato, mouthwatering flavour, hot or in salads! Ready to harvest from mid June.

**Maris Peer** – Expect heavy yields of medium sized tubers. Harvested when small they are good for making potato salads.

**Marshall's Gro-Sacks™ – the Original and Best, Designed for Gardeners by Gardeners!**

- 3 x 40 Litre Gro-Sacks (18in/45cm high)
- Made to last – from durable, interwoven polypropylene with sturdy handles
- 12 drainage ports to reduce water logging
- Now with new 'Easy Empty' handle at the bottom



WE WON'T BE  
BEATEN ON PRICE  
GUARANTEED!

## TO ORDER CALL 01480 44 33 90

Please quote order code APTKKGX1. Lines are open Monday-Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm.

## VISIT [www.marshall's-seeds.co.uk/TKKGX1](http://www.marshall's-seeds.co.uk/TKKGX1)



Growing a Bumper Crop of  
Tasty Potatoes IS SO EASY!



**Step 1**  
Half fill Gro-Sack  
with compost  
and fertiliser.  
Plant tubers  
4in deep.



**Step 2**  
As plants grow  
add more  
compost and  
fertiliser to  
fill Gro-Sack.



**Step 3**  
Water  
regularly  
and harvest  
in as little as  
7 weeks.

"The best way to grow potatoes. Never lets you down, no slug damage and you can move them around to get the best sunlight for very high yields." K. Little ★★★★★

### Each Gro-Kit Now Includes FREE Potato Fertiliser and FREE Chitting Tray!

To ensure a bigger, better crop our Gro-Kits now include:

- FREE pack of Marshall's concentrated potato fertiliser (N:P:K 15:21:24)
- FREE Chitting Tray to make chitting your potatoes easy.



### Marshall's Price Promise and Satisfaction Guarantee

We won't be beaten on price! If you can find a comparable potato gro-kit offer elsewhere, for less we'll beat it! What's more, anything you buy from us is backed by our 100% satisfaction guarantee.

**That's Our Promise!**

\*Must be of comparable quality, quantity and size, price excluding P&P. Sale, discounted kits and on-line only offers excluded.



Send to Marshall's, Alconbury Weston, Huntingdon, PE28 4HY

Please send me:		Price	Qty	Total Price
1090-6682	Taster Gro-Kit™	£9.95		
	2 Kits or More	£8.95		
Cheques or postal orders made payable to Marshalls		Postage & Packing		£3.95
		TOTAL AMOUNT		

Name: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

Delivery Address

Postcode

Email address

Telephone

☐ I enclose my cheque made payable to Marshall's

☐ Debit my ☐ VISA ☐ Mastercard ☐ Maestro ☐ Switch ☐

Card Number

Start Date     End Date     Maestro Issue Date     Card Security Number

Name on Card

(last 3 numbers on signature strip)

Signature

Code APTKKGX1

Offer subject to availability and cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer from Marshall's. See website for terms and conditions. Credit / debit cards charged at time of ordering. Gro-Sack™, Gro-Kit™, Eco-Sure™ and Bio-Gro™ are trademarks of S E Marshall & Co Ltd. Please tick ☐ if you would prefer not to receive offers other than from our Company.





# WEB WATCH

Helen Gazeley reviews some garden-related websites

As we gear up for spring, are you wishing you had more space to grow, or like-minded souls to chat to as you plant potatoes? An allotment is an obvious answer, but in some parts of the country you might as well suggest a search for hens' teeth.

All is not lost, though, for Britain is currently bursting with projects aimed at increasing local food production, bringing derelict land into use and uniting neighbourhoods. Community gardening has surely never been bigger.

One place to start is [www.landshare.net](http://www.landshare.net), the movement launched by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall in 2009, now numbering over 55,000 members, where people advertise a need for a vegetable patch, or offer the use of their garden. You can also volunteer as a Veg Doctor, to give advice, or look after a patch while someone's away.

Environmental concerns are the focus of some projects. The Transition Movement ([www.transitionnetwork.org](http://www.transitionnetwork.org)), centering on worries over oil consumption, now has a large number of groups nationally, with around 170 food initiatives either officially up and running or being mulled over by members. Some include garden-share schemes and you can search their website for one near you.

Other projects see growing food as a way to foster community. There's much talk of empowerment and inclusiveness, but it boils down to getting involved, making friends and enjoying the fruits of your collective labour. Finding them can take some ingenuity, as they have different names. GRO-FUN ([www.grofun.org.uk](http://www.grofun.org.uk)), in the Bristol area, dreams of neighbours growing and sharing food, knowledge and equipment. The scheme has now stretched to Birmingham. Further south, a similar scheme is Plymouth's Diggin' It ([www.diggin-it.org](http://www.diggin-it.org)).



Picture credit: Terry Rook. Copyright: The Soil Association

## Starting them young at the Canalside Community Food project

Capital Growth ([www.capitalgrowth.org](http://www.capitalgrowth.org)) in London aims to create 2012 new food growing spaces by 2012 – enter your postcode on the website to find one near you – while the Women's Environmental Network ([www.wen.org.uk](http://www.wen.org.uk)), centred in Tower Hamlets, is looking for Local Food volunteers, but also facilitates a national network of food growing groups, running exchange visits and training courses. Less London-centric, the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens ([www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)) supports such enterprises across the UK and offers a search facility to find one in your area.



Picture credit: Terry Rook. Copyright: The Soil Association

Members of the Loxley Valley Community Farm, part of the Community Supported Agriculture movement



Why not log on to  
[www.kitchengarden.co.uk](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk)

If you're tempted to fund a project yourself, the websites above provide useful examples, as well as information on funding, legal agreements to put land-share onto a secure footing, and links to groups and organisations that may be local to you. And if you'd like to follow the progress of a new group, the blog at [www.wisdominnature.org.uk](http://www.wisdominnature.org.uk) shows what's happening at the London Islamic Community Food project, based at Spitalfields City Farm.

A step nearer to self-sufficiency, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) describes widely varying schemes, some where members work farm allotments collectively or contribute to farm labour. One such scheme is the Canalside Community Food at Warwick with details on [www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk](http://www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk).

The Soil Association provides plenty of information ([www.soilassociation.org/csa.aspx](http://www.soilassociation.org/csa.aspx)) and [www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk](http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk) offers a downloadable manual on CSA, A Share in the Harvest. If it doesn't get you fired with enthusiasm, then CSA probably isn't for you.

It certainly works in Loxley Valley, though, and you couldn't do better than visit [www.loxleyvalleycommunityfarm.org.uk](http://www.loxleyvalleycommunityfarm.org.uk) – with useful downloads about poultry, livestock and their Good Neighbours Policy – to read a success story.



Landshare was launched by TV chef and kitchen gardener Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall



Do you have a favourite website. Contact Helen at [helengazeley@aol.com](mailto:helengazeley@aol.com).



**gabriel ash** "Naturally Superior Quality"

The only  
greenhouses  
endorsed by  
the RHS



Greenhouses

Lean To's

Patio Glasshouses

Coldframes

Shed Combi

Planthouses

Staging

# winter SALE



The 'Six' (6'x8')  
WAS £2,567  
SAVE £717

SALE PRICE  
**£1850**



The 'Ten' (10'x12')  
WAS £3,990  
SAVE £1040  
SALE PRICE  
**£2950**



The Hyde Hall  
WAS £8,750  
SAVE £3755

SALE PRICE  
**£4995**



The Grow & Store  
WAS £4,150  
SAVE £655

SALE PRICE  
**£3495**

## New Greenhouse Builder

Create your own custom greenhouse in 7 simple steps at [gabrielash.com](http://gabrielash.com)



**Step 1**  
Choose your  
range...



**Step 2**  
Choose your  
style...



**Step 3**  
Choose your  
width...



**Step 4**  
Choose your  
length...



**Step 5**  
Choose your  
wall type...



**Step 6**  
Choose your  
Accessories...



**Step 7**  
Choose your  
door...

VISIT OUR SHOWROOM AT

Monument Farm, Farndon,  
Chester CH3 6QP.

FOR THESE LATEST OFFERS CALL

**0800 0851 652**

OR VISIT US ONLINE AT

[gabrielash.com](http://gabrielash.com)



# ALLOTMENT LIFE

• Adrian Baggaley • Medwyn Williams • Joyce Russell • Lucy Halliday • Naomi Slade

## A passion for pyramids

Training apple trees in the shape of a cone or pyramid was very popular in the Victorian times. Keen fruit grower **Adrian Baggaley** explains the benefits of this shape of tree and how to create it



Adrian Baggaley does a little summer pruning

**T**he restricted form of tree, the dwarf pyramid, is little used nowadays, its peak in popularity was in the Victorian era, both for apples and pears. In fact the shape being more of a cone than a pyramid, but there are some distinct advantages in training trees into this shape.

Established pyramids are somewhat aerodynamic due their geometric shape and so require little or no staking, wires or posts. I for my part place two heavy 25cm (10in) concrete blocks either side of the stem for the first few years and this is a very effective way of preventing rocking. The blocks also conserve moisture beneath the tree, but can hide rodent activity.

### Benefits of the cone shape

A far greater asset is the increase in light received by a cone shape in comparison to other forms. The bottom 25 per cent of the cone receives 20 per cent of the available light which means that the remaining 75 per cent of the cone receives 80 per cent of the available light, this results in far better quality fruit. The quality of the fruit is directly related to the amount of light received; modern commercial systems use this principal in 'table tops' and 'leg' trees.

Although Henry Dunkin in his authoritative book, *The Pruning of Hardy Fruit Trees*, published in 1934 does not refer to them as mini pyramids, at a planting distance of 1m (3ft 3in) between trees for moderate growers and 1.2m (4ft) for stronger growers they are little more than vertical cordons. The distance between rows is 1.8-2.1m (6-7ft) and Dunkin's trees were worked (grafted) on improved Doucin rootstocks, the dwarf apple rootstocks of the day. The central stem is no more than 2.4m (8ft) high on completion of training and this makes much of the picking and pruning required possible from the ground.



## Forming a pyramid tree

(Dunkin method)

### YEAR ONE

**Winter:** Cut back maiden whip to around 18in (45cm) from the ground. A maiden whip is a one year old grafted fruit tree which will be a whippy stem with no branches.

### YEAR TWO

**Winter:** The central leading shoot is cut back 15-45cm (6-18in) above where the sideshoots start to radiate from the stem. The amount you have to cut back depends on the vigour of the tree. The cut should be on the opposite side to the previous winter's cut, the reason for doing this is to encourage a straight stem, this practise should be continued. The sideshoots which may be anything from three to five in number are pruned back to a downward-facing bud leaving around 20cm (9in) of new growth. This discourages vertical growth for a while at any rate and also encourages better spur (fruit bud) development. After pruning the tree will consist of between three and five short branches radiating out from the main stem, and above them the shortened central leader.

**Spring:** A technique called 'Intelligent ringing' can be done at this stage. In Dunkin's book it is deemed essential but as I have said below it isn't always necessary. The reasoning behind ringing is to induce the lateral buds to grow out and become proper lateral shoots. If ringing isn't done you may only get spurs, which is short fruiting wood.

Ringing is usually only used on the main stem and is done by holding the stem and placing a sharp knife midway between two buds above the point where it is desired to produce a sideshoot. The blade is pressed into the bark and rotated around to form a complete ring, no tissue is removed. In practise I have never had to do this because I find that pruning back the main stem in winter induces sideshoots to form naturally.

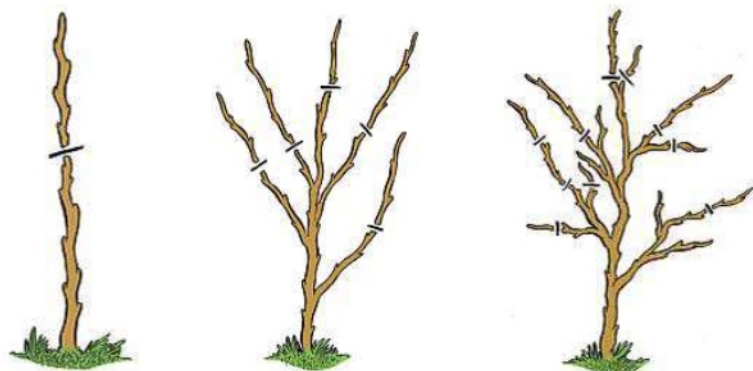
**Summer:** As a result of ringing, a second tier of shoots should have grown out in the same way as the bottom did. As a result of the previous winter's pruning the bottom tier of shoots will produce extension growth and the bud behind will produce a sideshoot. This is not required as a shoot and is summer pruned to two good buds to form a fruiting spur. These procedures are replicated on all tiers from bottom to top.

### YEAR THREE

**Winter:** By the third winter the tree will consist of a bottom tier containing three to five branches, possibly with fruiting spurs, a second tier pruned back to around 23cm (9in) and a leader cut back to leave 15-45cm (6-18in). This will result in tier number three in the third summer. When the tree has reached a height of around 2.4m (8ft) the main stem leader is summer pruned to two buds each year. Once the branch leaders have filled their allotted space they are also summer pruned to two buds. Anyone growing cordons will recognise that each and every branch leader on every tier is a horizontal cordon. The pyramid by definition is a series of horizontal cordons radiating out from a main stem from bottom to top, pruned in the modified Lorette system (Summer pruning first suggested as a technique by a Louis Lorette in the 1900s).

## The completed pyramid

Dunkin states that when the framework is complete the tree consists of a stem 2.4m (8ft) tall with about 50 short radiating branches covered with spurs or developing spurs. These branches vary from 30-60cm (1-2ft) in length, the whole tree thus forms a large fruiting surface in a small space and is capable of yielding a heavy weight of high grade fruit. This system was claimed to have great possibilities for intensive apple growing for commercial or private purposes, the key to obtaining the 50 odd short radiating branches would appear to be the intelligent ringing, for gardeners with limited space this system is a must.



Year 1 (winter)

Year 2 (winter)

Year 3 (winter)

## Horace Wright's method

*The Fruit Growers Guide* was written many years ago by Horace Wright who was not a man to do jobs by halves and when describing pyramid training he shows nine diagrams and includes the gruelling Victorian ritual of root pruning. Wright's objective by year four was a 1.2m (4ft) high by 75cm (2½ ft) wide tree, the branches of which were tied horizontal to tarred ropes fastened at the top and either side at the bottom to form a triangle, 'a sturdy and fruitful tree'. Wright suggests planting either side of paths, this must have created a very imposing sight.

### MY METHOD

(See diagrams below. Note: These are artistic impressions only. Cut to a downward-facing bud if possible)

This is very similar to the Dunkin method and combines a little of Horace's method too, such as tying down the stems.

### YEAR ONE

**Winter:** Prune maiden whip (one year old tree without sideshoots, termed as feathers) to leave 50cm (20in) of stem.

### YEAR TWO

**Winter:** Prune laterals (sideshoots) hopefully between three and five in number back to 25cm (10in) to a downward-facing bud. I pull all laterals down to the horizontal by tying some tights to the stem and holding the other end down with a brick. Prune main stem leader back to 38cm (15 in) to a bud on the opposite side to that pruned last year.

**Summer:** Summer prune sub laterals (ie any sideshoots) which have grown from laterals (main branches coming from main stem) on tier number one (bottom tier) to three or four buds, any growth from these in subsequent years is summer pruned back to one or two buds, this is a basic cordon summer pruning technique, ie modified Lorette System.

### YEAR THREE

**Winter:** The bottom tier requires extension growth to be pruned back to around 12cm (5in) to a downward facing bud. The main stem (leader) is pruned back to around 38cm (15in) above the top tier of branches, yet again to a bud opposite to last winter. Prune second tier laterals back to 12cm (5in) to a downward-facing bud.

**Summer:** You now have a bottom tier with fruiting spurs (hopefully) which requires summer pruning, do not summer prune any extension growths, they are always winter pruned until their allotted space is filled. The second tier also requires summer pruning. Third tier requires winter pruning and then summer pruning the following year, like the previous tiers.

My first pyramid apples on M26 rootstocks were planted as maiden whips in 2001 and produced their first good crop in 2006, the exception to this was a rather precocious 'Duchess of Oldenburgh' cooker which produced a good crop in 2005. My planting distances are around 3.5m (12ft) between trees and 5m (16ft) between rows. My pyramids are not really dwarfs, but I do get large crops. To follow Dunkin and Wright you would require your varieties to be grafted on to the more dwarfing M9 rootstock. A great deal of satisfaction is gained from growing a trained tree loaded down with fruit from a 50cm (20in) stick. When the requisite height and width has been achieved the main stem leader and branch leaders can be summer pruned to two buds annually.





'Red Devil' produces masses of tasty fruit

## Good varieties

### If space for one tree only try:

'Fiesta' (self fertile): Cox parentage, very productive, precocious, excellent keeping qualities, season early October to March, 2010 my 'Fiesta' kept to very early April, bred at East Malling Research, Kent, highly recommended.

### Two trees only:

'Katy' ('Katya'): A very productive Swedish variety, crisp and juicy, possibly one of the best early, season late August early September.

### Three trees only:

'Red Alkmene' (synonym 'Red Windsor'): Excellent cropper, reliable, it's got Cox in its blood, great flavour, originates from Germany. Colour dark red nearly black on my ground, season late September to early November.

### Four trees only:

'Lord Lambourne': In contrast to the other three this is an oldie, once grown commercially, very reliable cropper, good flavour, works well as an oblique cordon, resistant to scab.

### Five trees only:

'Egremont Russet': Another old variety, probably from Lord Egremont's estate at Petworth in Sussex. Grown commercially, described as nutty, I like it before it gets too dry, nice eaten with cheese, ripens to an attractive cinnamon colour sometimes has a flush, nice change from the usual run of the mill apple. Season late September/October.

### Six trees only:

'Kids Orange Red': A New Zealand apple, Cox parentage, precocious, excellent cropper, excellent flavour, season October/November.

### If you have the room add:

'Limelight': Similar to a ripe 'Golden Delicious' straight off the tree but easier to grow, very nice.

'Red Devil': Huge crops of deep red to nearly black fruit with a strawberry flavour, classed as organic (disease resistant) in 2009.

'Meridian': Bred at East Malling, Kent. I get a super abundance of crunchy juicy sweet apples. Can be affected by back end scab in a wet autumn, however are still worth growing.

'Peasgood Nonsuch': A very large and beautiful cooking apple, my flagship exhibition variety this has flavour and good looks, season late August to November, best picked straight off the tree.

## Pest and diseases

**SCAB:** This is a fungal disease (*Venturia Inaequalis*) that affects leaves shoots and fruit and is probably the most serious problem of apples and pears. The unsightly scabs make commercial apples fit only for juicing.

**Remedy:** Choose scab resistant varieties. Grow under a canopy to keep the rain off; rain washes the spores over the tree. Pick off scabby leaves and burn, prune out wood with scab lesions evident, clean up dead leaves at the end of the season. This will help break the cycle of infection and re-infection the following year, spray with a fungicide.

**CANKER:** Open wounds in the bark which eventually girdles the branch and cuts off the supply of sap, supposedly synonymous with poor drainage.

**Remedy:** Scrape off at the flattened bark stage back to the non-brown living tissue.

**MILDEW:** This appears as a white powder on the new leaves. It is a fungal disease that tends to overwinter around the bud and breaks out in spring during a dry period, realistically around two days of sunny warm weather appear to be enough for germination.

**Remedy:** Break off the whole truss of infected leaves and burn.

**BROWN ROT:** Predominately seen on fruit as rotting brown patches. It also affects blossom and new growth and is worse during wet spells and can cause die back of shoots.

**Remedy:** Good hygiene by removing all rotting fruit and snipping off affected shoots.

**CODLING MOTH:** The eggs hatch during the summer and the larvae (grubs) eat the foliage and enter the maturing fruit. Last year was a particularly bad year for it.

**Remedy:** Place pheromone traps in the trees from early May, the traps monitor the population of male moths. The traps are a preventative measure rather than a cure.

**WINTER MOTH:** The wingless females climb the trees in late autumn and winter to hibernate and to lay their eggs in spring. The eggs hatch and the larvae proceed to devour flowers, foliage and fruitlets.

**Remedy:** Position grease bands around trunks to catch the females.



Damage and webbing caused by tortrix moth

**APPLE SAWFLY:** For me this does more damage than the previous two pests put together. The eggs are laid around the flowers and embryo fruitlets and the larvae crawl around the tree going from fruit to fruit. As the larvae get bigger the hole on the fruitlet gets bigger. It requires constant monitoring in May, but if you are on the ball you will catch some 'at home'; split open the fruitlets with your thumb and evict the squatter.

**Remedy:** Pick off infected fruitlets, open and destroy the larvae. Organic mulches tend to exacerbate the problem by providing a nice friable habitat for the pest to pupate in and to spend autumn and winter underground.

**TORTRIX MOTH:** Not a serious pest in my orchard but keep your eyes peeled for a spectacular web wrapped around the leaves on a shoot, inside you may find a mass of caterpillars devouring leaves and fruitlets.

**Remedy:** Pick off and destroy.

**ROSY APPLE APHID:** These are like greenfly that you get on your roses and they suck the sap causing leaves to curl and fruitlet development to become stunted.

**Remedy:** Rub off aphids before colonies develop.

**SLUGS AND SNAILS:** I don't know if molluscs climbing trees is a recent trait but I'm increasingly finding them in the fruit trees and indeed on the fruit. During 2008 and 2009 I found unexplained grazing on the fruitlets and indeed damage to mature fruit which had partially healed and appeared to have been caused very early on in the season.



Snails will climb trees to reach the fruit



# KG READER OFFER

## Apple tree offer

We have joined forces with Pomona Fruits to bring you a great offer of maiden apple trees. The beauty of these younger trees is you have a tree which can easily be turned into a pyramid as described above or you can create a cordon or espalier or any shape or form you desire. Once the tree gets older it is more difficult and takes more work to create the tree shape you want. To ensure rapid establishment, these maiden apple trees are supplied bare-rooted and will be 1.2-1.5m (4-5ft) high on despatch. They are ideal for growing as bush trees or pyramids. To ensure adequate pollination, it is usually best to choose two different varieties ('Red Devil' and 'Red Windsor' are self-fertile and will not require a pollinator).

### (A) Apple Fiesta

A crisp, juicy red flushed dessert apple with a rich, aromatic Cox-like flavour. A very popular garden variety, less prone to disease than Cox and suitable for the north. Heavy cropping. Stores very well.

### (B) 'Red Windsor'

An aromatic Cox-like apple which is sweeter, more disease resistant and ripens earlier than Cox. Heavy crops of red flushed dessert apples. An excellent garden variety. Suitable for the north. Self-fertile.

### (C) 'Egremont Russet'

The most popular russet apple, raised in England 1872. Very distinctive nutty flavour. Resistant to scab, mildew and canker. Can be grown successfully throughout the UK



'Egremont Russet' has a lovely nutty flavour

### (D) 'Kidd's Orange Red'

One of the finest flavoured dessert apples, similar to Cox but sweeter in flavour with a more reddish flush. Strongly aromatic with a good balance of sugar and acidity.

### (E) 'Red Devil'

This popular dessert variety is a great choice for organic gardeners. It produces highly decorative bright red apples that are crisp with a superb strawberry flavour. Resistant to scab and mildew. Suitable for wet areas. Self-fertile.

\*Prices vary from £15.25 (see order form for details) Postage and packing is £6.95.



'Kidd's Orange Red' is strongly aromatic

## How to order

Call 0845 6760607 with your credit or debit card, quoting offer code 'KG2AP' or order online at [www.PomonaFruits.co.uk/KG2AP](http://www.PomonaFruits.co.uk/KG2AP). Alternatively, please fill in the order form and post with payment to: Pomona Fruits Ltd, Department KG2AP, Pomona House, 12 Third Avenue, Walton-on-Naze, Essex CO14 8JU. Offer closes on 28/02/2011. Offer is available to UK mainland only. Delivery will be within 28 days.

Product	Description	Price	Qty
Apple Fiesta (A)		£15.70	
Apple Red Windsor (B)		£16.55	
Apple Egremont Russet (C)		£15.25	
Apple Kidd's Orange Red (D)		£15.70	
Apple Red Devil (E)		£15.70	
Postage		£6.95	
		Total payment £	

I enclose my cheque for £..... made payable to 'Pomona Fruits Ltd' or please debit my Visa/Mastercard/Maestro/Delta card for £.....

Card Number .....

Valid from ..... Expiry date .....

Issue No (if applicable) ..... Security Number (last 3 digits on signature strip) .....

Signature: .....

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

Post Code: ..... Telephone No: .....



For a self-fertile tree try 'Red Windsor'



# The land of the giants

To grow record-breaking giant vegetables takes skill and dedication. **Medwyn Williams** talks to one of the most consistent winners of recent years and offers top tips for those who'd like to try their hand in the classes this year

**T**he giant vegetable classes at the flower shows are certainly very popular with the public. They put a smile on visitors' faces when they see the exhibits laid out on tables that are sagging under the weight. The truth however is that these giants don't just simply develop by accident, an awful lot of hard work, knowledge and time goes into producing them. When I ask some of the top growers of giant vegetables why they do it, I often get the same answer that you get when

you ask someone why they climb the highest mountain – it's simply the challenge.

One champion of the giant vegetable world is Peter Glazebrook who has won hundreds of prizes with a range of different vegetables over many years. Peter gave a talk at my Masterclass Weekend on how to grow the heaviest onion last November and the amount of time, hard work and dedication lavished on them was incredible. Peter is now certainly the one to beat with the

heaviest onion having won at the Harrogate heaviest onion competition for three years running. Last September his heaviest onion weighed in at 15lb 9oz (a little over 7kg) and his aim now is to break the current world record of 16lb 8½oz (around 7.5kg).

If determination is anything to go by, Peter will achieve that dream and he is also very fortunate in having the total support of his wife Mary who goes with him to all the shows. Dedication and knowledge together are certainly a formidable duo and when you grow onions singularly in 150-litre pots in a tunnel inside another tunnel, nothing is left to chance. Peter's onions by now will be growing away well having been sown since early November last year and in another month or so they will be ready to be planted into their final pots. Peter's 10 onions will fill his small tunnel with five of the 150-litre pots on either side.

## Record-smashing spuds

Peter is also the current world record holder for the heaviest potato which he brought with him to my talk together with the Guinness World Record framed certificate. The monster potato (variety 'Kondor'), weighed in at 3.76kg (approx 8lb 4½oz) and though a little misshapen, to say the least, I'm positive it was edible as well. Not all the giant vegetables are edible of course as it is primarily a 'fun' thing but if anyone had the guts to ask Peter to cut his potato in half to prove the point, he'd be a braver man than me! The heaviest onion that he won with at Harrogate was also on display during his talk and to really appreciate its sheer size and weight you only have to stand next to it. The one thing that did strike me about his onions (he had another three with him as well) was their superb condition. Any of the onions would have been perfectly edible, provided of course you had plenty of space in your fridge for the left-overs!



Peter Glazebrook took top honours in the heaviest onion competition held at Harrogate Autumn Flower Show for the third year in succession with this 15lb 9oz whopper



Peter's massive spud may not be beautiful, but it smashed the world record for a single tuber



## The king of cabbages

Peter also does pretty well with his giant cabbages. These are of the same strain that I sell in my current seed catalogue as Peter gave me some of his seeds originally. The variety is an old heritage type that is generally called the 'Cornish Giant' cabbage and needs quite a long season to grow to reach its enormous potential size. You certainly couldn't grow many of these in your garden as they'd take up a huge chunk of it, but then with enough food in one cabbage to feed the five thousand, why would you grow more than a couple? They are certainly great fun as well and now is the time to be thinking about starting some seeds in a warm greenhouse or propagator.

As with all vegetable seeds, the seedlings will develop a much better and stronger root system if the initial compost is low in nutrients. My preferred choice is Levington F1 from the professional range and the seedlings from this can be moved on into Levington F2S (this has added sand and slightly more nutrients) and then Levington M2 (a medium grade potting compost). It is perfectly possible to produce good results by using the sowing and potting composts available from your local garden centre, however.

The seeds we sell are untreated and are therefore free from any chemicals. Fill either a small shallow pot with the compost or a small tray, gently flatten it down and space the seeds evenly on top. Press them down gently into the compost with a flat board and cover them over with some fine grade vermiculite. Moisten the seed tray from the bottom by floating it in some water until fully charged. When the seedling leaves are fully developed and just

as the first true leaf is emerging, transplant them into 7.5-9cm (3-3½in) pots. When lifting them out of the pot or tray, use an old dinner fork from the house and take great care not to damage or even bruise the main stem. As with all vegetables that you are growing early, and under glass in the warmth, it's important they grow on unchecked until they are ready for hardening off and eventually planting out.

The cabbages are potted on when necessary; I usually plant mine out of 18cm (7in) pots. At that stage they will be in a mixture of 50 per cent Levington M3 (a medium grade potting compost) and 50 per cent sieved top soil from my field, I will also add a little bit of medium grade vermiculite to aid drainage and to ensure that there is plenty of air getting through the compost and around the roots. The preparation of the ground for planting is important and it does need to be prepared as soon as possible now. Most of the giant vegetables will thrive on rich fertile soil so the incorporation of plenty of well-rotted farmyard manure is definitely a plus. Not only does it break down into humus and also releases nutrients to feed the roots, it will also act as a great sponge in periods of drought and prevent the cabbage from having a check in growth which could lead to bolting (premature flowering).

### TOP TIP

- Always hold the seedling by the leaf and remember that at this stage the stem of the young seedling is extremely brittle so do make sure that you don't bend while transplanting.



A cabbage fit for a king – and enough left over to feed the Royal Household!

When I ask some of the top growers of giant vegetables why they do it, I often get the same answer that you get when you ask someone why they climb the highest mountain – it's simply the challenge



Medwyn recommends parsley 'Faulds' for its decorative foliage

## Stirling moss curled

Parsley is a really important element of my displays and I believe that the old heritage variety 'Faulds' is the best one to use. This moss-leaf type truly does live up to its name, its tight foliage being perfect for garnishing. There is an old saying that parsley seed goes to the devil before it germinates and this almost certainly came about because of the haphazard way in which it appears. Sow sparingly on top of some seed compost, press down gently into the compost and very lightly cover the seed over. Place the seed tray on a heated propagating blanket or inside a propagator and keep the compost moist at all times.

The seedlings can often take at least three weeks to appear through the compost and even then sporadically with some germinating up to six weeks later. I like to transplant the young seedlings into 40 cell trays from which they will get potted up into 7.5cm (3in) pots. You can continually pot these up into larger containers and they do make magnificent-looking mature plants for display or for entering into classes for 'any other vegetable'. I do find with parsley grown in a large pot that the addition of about a third of sieved top soil to the Levington M3, or potting compost in the final potting, gives the plant an added boost.

### TOP TIP

- As with celery, (both are members of the umbelliferae family) parsley prefers diffused light for germination, so cover only very lightly after sowing.





# Family matters – Legumes

Every month **Joyce Russell** will be looking at different vegetable families. This month she takes a look at the pea and bean family

**L**eguminosae is the official name for what is commonly known as the pea family, or the pea and bean family. Many people also refer to these as 'legumes'. It's convenient to have a name that embraces them all since they share so many characteristics and growing requirements. The varieties many gardeners are most interested in are: peas, including mangetout; broad beans; runner beans and French beans. There are other varieties of edible bean of course, but many of these require a warmer climate than we can offer.

Legumes produce large seeds and pods. It can be either, or both, of these features that make them good kitchen garden vegetables. The fact that plants often crop heavily, that they fix nitrogen into the soil, that the seeds are a great source of protein, and that both peas and beans taste really good, are other reasons why legumes come high up the list for most vegetable growers. On top of that, the typical pea flower – in shades from white to deep crimson – is an attractive feature for any garden.

## Fixing nitrogen

Peas and beans have nodules on their roots. The nodules are colonised by rhizobacteria. These can extract nitrogen from the air and convert it into a form that is useable by the plant. This is a particularly useful symbiotic relationship and one that means peas and beans can crop well even on a soil that is low in nitrogen.

It's often recommended that plants should be cut off close to the ground when a crop is cleared. This is so the roots can continue to release their nitrogen into the soil as they break down.

## Acid or alkaline?

Legumes do best on soil with a pH of 6.5 to 7. Acidic soils can be adjusted by scattering hydrated lime, or wood ashes on the soil's surface. Both of these will be washed down into the soil and will alter the pH in the immediate environment of the roots.

Lime can be added to the bed several months before planting, but I have always found that 'spot-treating' rows at sowing, or planting time works just as well – the benefits aren't washed away by heavy winter rains.

If soil is very alkaline, add compost, manure, sulphur chips or coffee grounds. However, legumes usually do much better on an alkaline soil than they do on an acid one, so lowering pH isn't essential.



Liming increases soil pH



## Soil preparation

Legumes do best on a well dug, moisture retaining soil. Because these plants fix nitrogen, there is no need to dig manure into the plot, but they still need other minerals. Bear in mind that too much feeding can lead to lots of leaf at the expense of pods. Compost is the answer! This can be put as a thick layer in the bottom of a trench where it will hold moisture and provide a mineral source. Roots will soon find their way down into the compost.

## Planting peas

Both peas for podding and mangetout peas require the same treatment. Some varieties (usually round seeded as opposed to wrinkle seeded) can be sown in the autumn, or late winter, to give the earliest crops. These will always do best if they are given some form of protection, either in a greenhouse or polytunnel, or outdoors under a cloche. Cloches should be opened on fine days and removed altogether once plants grow too big. Spring and summer sowings are fine without any extra covering.

Peas can be planted over a trench half filled with compost. The seed should go 5cm (2in) deep, 5cm (2in) apart in the row. Sow a double row over each trench allowing 15cm (6in) between the two rows.

Check the height of the variety you are growing and allow plenty of room for picking if you grow more than one double row. Usually 75cm (30in) is about right, although this can soon feel crowded as the plants grow.

Seedlings can take a while to come through and 21 days isn't unusual. It may be longer than this in very cold conditions or less than this if the soil is warm.

## Starting in pots

All peas and beans do well if they are started off in trays, or individual pots. You can even plant in a length of guttering filled with compost. Plants raised under cover in this way will be less vulnerable to frost and pests. They suffer little when planted out at a few inches tall, provided they have been grown in a reasonable depth of compost and root disturbance is kept to a minimum.



Peas and beans can be started in containers

All peas and beans do well if they are started off in trays, or individual pots. You can even plant in a length of guttering filled with compost

## Planting beans

Broad beans and dwarf French beans can be planted in the same way as peas, but allow 15cm (6in) between seeds in a row. Double rows go 20cm (8in) apart. Some varieties of broad bean, such as 'Aquadulce Claudia', can be planted in late autumn with a little protection from frost, as for peas. If the foliage does get frosted, sprinkle cold water over the leaves to thaw it before the morning sun hits them and causes any damage.

French and runner beans can be killed by frost. Late March is soon enough to sow undercover although mid-April is usually peak time for sowing in pots undercover for planting out young plants mid to late May. From late May/early June in most areas you can direct sow outdoor.

Runner beans and climbing French beans also benefit from a good supply of compost. Allow 20cm (8in) between each seed – the placing of these will relate to whatever support structure is used.



Planting out runner beans that have been sown under cover

## A bit of support

All except the smallest of varieties need some support.

- Peas grow well with large twiggy sticks as support, or use a strong fencing material that can be stretched between stakes at each end. The peas produce tendrils that twine round the support structure, but a considerable weight of foliage will have to be held up. If the row starts to slump, add in extra sticks.
- When seedlings are 10cm (4in) tall they will start to look for support. Small sticks in the row will start plants heading upward onto taller supports.
- Broad beans do not climb, or twine, but they do grow long stems that can be blown down by the wind. The best way to support a row is to knock stout straight sticks in at the corners and at intervals along the sides. Tie string around these to form a perimeter fence. As the plants grow, add more layers of string higher up the sticks.
- Dwarf French beans don't really need support since they grow so low to the ground. However, it is worth running a line of string up each side of the row. This stops the plants flopping sideways and pods are kept clear of the ground.
- Climbing French beans will twist the whole stem around any support. They may need pointing in the right direction when young plants first seek something to climb up, but after that they will do the job on their own. Canes, poles, or pieces of string tied up to a frame, will do a good job. Use one support next to each bean – they are rampant climbers.
- Runner beans are usually planted at the foot of canes or straight sticks. The canes are tied up into a tepee or 'A' frame structure. Plant two or three seeds for each cane. If your garden suffers a lot of slug damage it might be worth sowing more, in the hope that two or three will survive.



Twiggy sticks are ideal for peas





A thick mulch of organic matter keeps moisture in the soil

## A word on mulch

All legumes love water. This is particularly important when the plants are in flower. If water is restricted at this time, fewer flowers will grow pods.

One option is to water daily, but in a dry summer this might not be possible. The best solution is to cut down on moisture evaporating from the soil. Compost will hold water in the trench, but mulch will do the same job for the surface of the soil.

Use grass clippings, straw, newspaper, cardboard, or anything else that comes to hand. Always make sure the ground is damp before the mulch is put down and use a material that rain can soak through. There are few crops that benefit more from this treatment than peas and beans.

Mulch will also help to keep paths between rows free of weeds.

## Pointers on pollination

Peas and beans are self-fertile which means that they don't need an external pollinator. Having said this, peas fare better than beans if there is no helping hand. The hand can be in the form of insects, or the wind shaking the stems and allowing pollen to do its job.

French beans pollinate before the flower opens, so there is little danger of cross fertilisation. Peas also have closed flowers so tend not to cross with other varieties.

Broad beans can be quite promiscuous and will cross with other broad beans in the garden. In my experience they crop best if wind, or bees, have easy access to ensure a good set. This will mean that seed doesn't breed true, but you will get a better crop.

Runner beans will cross-pollinate with others grown close by, but if you only grow one variety and the neighbouring garden doesn't grow any, you should get pure seed and a plentiful crop.

First bean flowers may not set if it is too dry. Misting with water can make all the difference.

Runner beans will cross-pollinate with others grown close by, but if you only grow one variety and the neighbouring garden doesn't grow any, you should get pure seed and a plentiful crop



Successful pollination of broad beans

## Harvesting

Peas and beans are at their best when they are young, tender and fresh. It's amazing that pea pods make their way to the kitchen at all, since the contents are so delicious straight from the plant. Keep picking regularly once pods start to swell (or before that point if you're growing mangetout where the aim is to eat the whole pod!)

If pods start to toughen on runners or French beans, you can shell the beans out of the pods. These will still be tasty enough when cooked, even though the pods are past their best.

If you have a glut, all peas and beans freeze well.



Young peas are sweet and tender



Pick broad beans before the skins toughen



Runner beans are strong climbers and soon find their supports





Dry seeds such as peas can be stored in tubs and placed in a cool, dry place until needed

## Saving seed

It's easy to save seed from peas and beans, provided you understand the pollination pointers mentioned here and provided you only save seed from healthy plants.

Pea and French bean pods should be left on the plant until the seeds swell to full size and pods start to shrivel. If peas are shelled on to a piece of kitchen paper and left on a window ledge, they will dry completely in 7-10 days. Small French bean seeds take about the same time, larger ones will take a little longer.

Seed can be saved from broad beans and runner beans provided the chances of cross-pollination are minimised. Larger beans can be dried in the same way as peas, they will take two weeks or more to fully dry out.

Dry seed can be stored in envelopes, or small sealable plastic tubs. Make sure each container is labelled and use the seed in the following year.

Note: Don't try to save seed from F1 varieties. It won't breed true!



Joyce sows broad beans in double rows



Legumes produce easily identifiable flowers

It's easy to save seed from peas and beans, provided you understand the pollination pointers mentioned here and provided you only save seed from healthy plants

## Pests and diseases

Slugs and snails can be a problem when legumes are at the seedling stage. Use ferric phosphate based pellets as an organically approved solution.

Pea and bean weevil will nibble the edges of leaves. This is only a problem if leaves are eaten on young seedlings. Larger plants still have plenty of leaf. Cover rows with polythene cloches to act as a physical barrier when seedlings emerge. By the time the cloche is removed, the plants should be big enough to survive an attack.

Blackfly will attack broad beans in June. Cut off and burn any growing points at the first sign of attack (see below).

Mildew can be a problem in late pea crops. The leaves and pods can both suffer. Keep soil and foliage dry if possible.



Removing blackfly infested stems





Each month Lucy looks at a common plant pest or disease and explains how to combat it

# Know your enemy...

## Pea and bean weevil

This month our attention is focused on an unassuming little beetle, the pea and bean weevil (*Sitona lineatus*) and how to prevent it from eating our pea and bean plants



Although damage is often slight, when the beetles are breeding around mid-May, a feeding frenzy may ensue!



Picture top courtesy: Udo Schmidt

Broad bean leaves showing the notches, typical of early attack.

### Prevention

The very best prevention tactic is to produce the strongest plants as early as possible as these will be able to compensate for any attack. Understanding the timing of the beetle's pheromone induced dash helps to work out when best to sow your seeds. Research shows that most damage is done to plants emerging around the 15 May so ensuring your plants are growing strongly by this point is a must. Luckily both peas and beans can be sown as early as October/November the previous year for the earliest start. Choose the hardiest varieties for overwintering and use cloches to protect the soil for best results. In spring time early varieties of peas and broad beans can be sown as soon as late January-February under cloches in mild areas and in colder climes peas can easily be started in a length of drain pipe or cell trays. This extra time allows strong root development and sturdier plants by the time the weevils come hunting.

Fleece coverings are another perfect solution if put in place at the earliest opportunity before the weevils mobilize in March-April. These will prevent access and protect young plants from cold snaps. It is important to bear in mind, if you are a convert to green manures, not to provide your pests with a food source and convenient winter hiding place. Alfalfa makes an excellent green manure but is also one of the weevils' favourites. If your garden suffers from a weevil problem you would do well to choose another type of green manure.

### Treatment

Where beetles are already munching the organic solutions are either vigilance and hand removal, which can be helped by placing white cloth or paper around the base of the plant and shaking gently, or naturally derived insecticides.

Neem oil can be found through online suppliers and sprayed on to plants where it will deter feeding, disrupt larval growth and moulting and will not harm beneficial insects. Synthetic sprays include pyrethroid compounds such as Westland Plant Rescue Fruit & Vegetable Bug Killer.

The adult pea and bean weevil is a 4-6mm long grey-brown, snout-nosed beetle which may have barely distinguishable stripes along its body.

### Spread and damage

Found throughout Europe to North Africa, the Canary Islands and Israel, this little critter has even found its way to the USA. Many references are quite dismissive of this weevil as a pest, stating that it does not really do much harm. In the case of strong, vigorously growing plants this can be true but the fact that both stages of its life cycle attack our plants mean that timing is everything in terms of the extent of the damage it can cause. Damage is much greater in spring crops as well established plants are much better able to withstand attack, but severe infestations can cause losses of up to 25 per cent.

### Ecology and Lifecycle

Adult weevils spend the winter nestled in and under the perennial leguminous plants including long grasses, clover, alfalfa or the stubble left in pea and bean fields. They start to become active between March-May when air temperatures reach around 12-15C (54-60F) and soil surface temperatures around 19-20C (66-68F). They spread out in search of food across the ground at first, then, as the shoots of the first legumes emerge they begin to fly further afield. By May to early June they are in a feeding frenzy, cutting characteristic U-shaped chunks out of the edges of leaves. With time for only one generation per year, the beetles soon get to work mating and laying eggs.

Mating and egg laying occurs from May to early June and males of the species produce a scent (pheromone) irresistible to other weevils, male and female alike. In response to this pheromone beetles flock together, eating and mating like there may be no tomorrow. Studies have shown that the peak production time for pheromone release, coincides with the greatest damage to foliage as beetles are drawn to the best feeding grounds. Researchers have looked at the feasibility of turning the tables on our beetle by luring them in to traps using the pheromone. It is certainly the case that traps baited with other beetles with some bean foliage to eat, captured far more individuals than standard yellow sticky traps.

A female beetle can lay up to 3600 eggs which she will place on the host plant or soil surface. During hot, dry weather many of these eggs may perish but the survivors hatch out and burrow down to the safety of the roots. Here larvae feed exclusively on the plant's specialised nitrogen fixing root nodules. This is the source of the serious damage as the plant relies on these to fix sufficient nitrogen from the atmosphere for its growth. Larvae will feed for three to four weeks before pupating towards the end of June, beginning of July. After only eight to 11 days, the new generation of paler coloured young beetles will emerge from the soil to feed on as much remaining foliage as they can before settling down for their winter sleep in September.





### Early Large Purple Wight

1 BULB - A softneck, large purple garlic from S.W. France. Plant autumn for at least 10 plants ready in May. Excellent as green garlic



### Tuscany Wight

1 BULB - This large white softneck garlic (*allium sativum*) is a late type, like Venetian & Solent Wight. Hailing from Northern Italy, harvested in July, planted in Spring. Good keeping quality and most significant of all, big fat cloves all the way through the bulb.



### Solent Wight

2 BULBS - Plant autumn / spring for 20-40 plants, ready in July. White longkeeping to April, softneck with exceptional taste, elegant bouquet.



### Lautrec Wight

1 BULB - A hardneck classic of S.W. France. Attractive white-skinned garlic with deep purple cloves. Held by some in France to be the ultimate 'ail de cuisine'.



### Iberian Wight

1 BULB - Plant autumn or early spring for 10 plants, ready mid June - Large white softneck from Cordoba region of Spain.





THE  
**GARLIC  
FARM**  
ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

Visit  
**[www.thegarlicfarm.co.uk](http://www.thegarlicfarm.co.uk)**  
**for the UK's widest selection  
of garlic for planting**

.....

**GARLIC LOVERS GROWING PACK**  
...with full instructions on growing, harvesting  
and plaiting including how to grow in  
pots and on patios.

**Normally £30 delivered**  
**Order online & save £5**

When ordering online please use promotional code 'KIT10'  
Delivery from mid September

**01983 865378**

The Garlic Farm • Mersley Lane Newchurch • Isle of Wight PO36 0NR  
Credit cards accepted, or send cheque made out to 'The Garlic Farm'  
We reserve the right to replace any varieties with suitable alternatives.



### Elephant Garlic

2 CLOVES - Plant autumn/early spring producing massive bulbs up to 7 inches across. Ideal for roasting. Produces beautiful 5 foot flowerheads in the herbaceous border.



### Albigensian Wight

1 BULB - Plant autumn or early spring for 12 plants, ready mid June. Large white softneck. The garlic of the Cathars, 13th Century heretics.



### Provence Wight

1 BULB - Originating in the lush valleys of the Drôme in northern Provence. White softneck producing bulbs that approach Elephant Garlic size. Sweet and substantial. Keeps until January.

### Chesnok Wight

1 BULB - Plant from September to January, harvest from mid June onwards. A purple hardneck from the southern Ukraine on the Black Sea.



# The sleeping soil

Soil is the substance on which we all depend for our flourishing and productive patches. Juliet Barber offers advice on its care through the winter months.

Photographs by Juliet Barber

**W**e all want soil that feels beautiful and crumbly and yet slightly sticky in the hands when damp; ideally a rich darkish brown colour, full of nutrients, worms and generally easy to dig. Well the principles for obtaining this perfect mix are essentially simple. The millions of soil organisms, to an extent, depend on us and the way we choose to manage our land. Realising the importance of keeping our soil 'alive' can ensure good growing conditions.

Soil microbes, soil fauna and roots which make up the biological component are intimately associated with the creation of soil structure. In turn their activities are governed by the soil they have helped to create and so the cycle continues. Virtually all organisms found in the uppermost layers of soil contribute to the development of soil structure.

## Winter plots

Winter as far as the gardener is concerned begins at the first sign of a frost and ends at the last. In the northern hemisphere we have a temperate and seasonal climate. However our seasons can sometimes surprise us, with uncharacteristically hot, cold, wet or dry weather when we least expect it. Add to this location and orientation and vegetable gardening can become quite a challenge! Maybe your plot has its own micro-climate conveniently sheltered by a boundary of hedging and trees? Perhaps it is within a

town and protected by buildings? It could be exposed to the elements, on a hillside, facing the sea, be prone to waterlogging or is in a shady hollow. The soil is greatly affected by the position of our plots and the extent and severity of cold seasonal weather. If winter is harsh and has a prolonged freeze, signs of life can seem limited or even non-existent.

## Cold storage

So what happens during winter when temperatures drop? While soil can store up heat from the sun it will conduct heat faster back into the atmosphere when it is frozen. The carbon cycle is greatly affected by climatic variables, temperature and precipitation being the most influential as they govern the rates of chemical reactions and the growth and activities of organisms in the soil. In winter the livelihoods of larger soil organisms like insects are under threat because they are reliant on external heat as they can't generate their own. If they are to survive they must find dry hibernation places. Ladybirds for example share heat by hibernating communally often under rocks or bits of wood. Insects which over-winter as adults and become dormant are in a slow metabolic state called diapause. When temperatures really dip the consequences can be fatal to larger soil organisms. Carbon becomes locked into frozen ground as microbial activity slows or stops completely.

The carbon cycle is greatly affected by climatic variables, temperature and precipitation being the most influential as they govern the rates of chemical reactions and the growth and activities of organisms in the soil



Although soil can be slow to cool in the autumn, once frozen it quickly loses heat to the atmosphere after a sunny winter's day

## Millions of microbes

The soil contains more species than any other environment on Earth! Knowing what happens to these organisms during winter can help us understand why our relationship with the soil matters. The two most abundant members of the soil community are fungi and bacteria. Both of these act as primary decomposers in the soil and are very necessary to soil health, affecting availability of plant nutrients and thus plant health. Microbes can degrade virtually all plant-derived compounds which have first been fragmented by larger soil organisms. In the soil ecosystem then, microbes have a really important role. They are essential to the process of decomposition and mineralisation, and these activities can determine the availability to plants.

Their extreme diversity also means that they can co-exist as a soil community without too much competition. There is a species for every niche! Many of these can survive unfavourably cold conditions through their ability to remain inactive. Some bacteria can even withstand being frozen as their membranes don't burst as do those of multi-cellular animals. But of all the myriad of soil organisms, the earthworm has the most admirable survival strategy.





## Wonderful worms

"The Intestines of the Earth" was Aristotle's wonderfully apt description of earthworms. Charles Darwin also regarded earthworms highly and studied their effects on soil for many years. These cold-blooded prehistoric creatures are truly astonishing. They make up most of the animal biomass in soil and are most active in spring and autumn. Feeding on organic matter and converting it into rich humus is achieved by the worms' actions of pulling down below any suitable material eg leaves, manure and then shredding and partially digesting it.

Material which has passed through the earthworm's gut has 1000 times more soil-benevolent bacteria acting as a powerful biocide and helps to eliminate soil diseases. It also contains high concentrations of nitrogen, sulphur, potash, phosphorus, calcium, magnesium, growth hormones and vitamins. They are essential to composting and a healthy 'living' soil – soils with plenty of worms are the best.

Harsh winters can wipe out earthworms but as cold weather causes the soil to harden and cool some species make cocoons of eggs which can survive freezing temperatures while others will burrow deeper into the ground. There they curl up in a burrow pocket, produce anti-freeze mucus which surrounds their bodies and begin a type of hibernation called estivation. Their reduced metabolic rate keeps them ticking over so that when warmth returns to the soil in spring they will have survived long enough to continue reproduction. This incidentally can happen frequently; worm populations can double every 60 days! They can also live for two to three years given the right conditions, and eat more than their own body weight every day. It would seem that they are so abundant we should hardly ever need to worry about them. However, vegetable growing will deplete the soil of its nutrients. Without a replenished organic layer the soil will become barren and lifeless. While earthworms are practically working miracles and can even break down certain soil chemicals which are harmful to humans into harmless residues – they are sensitive to others. Pesticides can kill earthworms as can fluctuations of pH and oxygen levels in soil and the overuse of fertilisers.



Worms have been described as the intestines of the earth and are essential for the health of our soils. There are 26 species in the UK – these are lob worms – one of the largest

## Mulching matters

Earthworms devour our biological wastes so the solution to a fortified vegetable plot, healthy soil and happy worms lies in the provision of organic waste – something we have plenty of. In the vegetable garden as plants die down they should be added to a compost heap where the decomposition process can continue. Adding a good mulch (7.5-10cm/3-4in) of organically composted material at the end of the year, ideally just before the first frosts, will nurture the depleted soil by protecting the snoozing soil organisms. This layer will also keep temperatures more constant and less likely to fluctuate between freeze-thaw conditions.

Forking this in can initiate a burst of microbial activity, which is good, but too much tillage can have an adverse affect. This is because it encourages the soil to dry out and damages its structure, over-crumbling it and killing insects at the higher end of the soil food chain. It can be disturbing to earthworms too, such as our largest native earthworm, the lob worm (*Lumbricus terrestris*) which builds permanent vertical burrows up to 3m (10ft) deep and emerges at night to pull leaf litter down into the ground.



Composting worms play a vital role

## Mulch later

Once the ground is frozen mulching is probably best left until early spring. If you didn't manage to mulch on time it is worth doing once the soil has thawed a few weeks before planting any vegetables. Just look after your compost heaps well in the meantime perhaps covering them with old carpet to help preserve the composting worms. And if it snows don't try and scrape or brush it away – it is quite a good insulator.

## Go green

It is worth experimenting with winter cover crops too, such as red clover or vetch which have an added benefit of fixing nitrogen. Cover crops act as a living mulch and cause rapid population increases in the microbes which attack the freshly incorporated plant material. During the breakdown of the plant tissues there is a release of nutrients which can feed spring crops. Cover crops can also help to keep the topsoil from freezing so deeply, or washing away during heavy rain and prevent cool season weeds from germinating. They then can be dug into the soil in early spring as a green manure enriching the soil even further.



Green manures or cover crops help to protect the soil and add organic matter when dug in. The clovers add nitrogen thanks to the nodules on their roots

## What about diseases?

Some gardeners might worry that all this soil nurturing and keeping it warm might lead to more of the 'nasties' too, allowing them to survive rather than being killed off by a good hard frost. While cold weather can help to kill plant diseases and pests it is also true that by treating the soil with respect the resulting natural community will look after itself. It is only when there is an imbalance problems take hold.

So get composting and get mulching! Whether sleeping, dying, decaying or emerging, the soil organisms will thank you for the trouble by continuing their work silently and dependably the following year.



**DIG IT  
DIARY -  
FEBRUARY  
WITH  
NAOMI  
SLADE**



# Little shoots of promise

It was great excitement for **Naomi Slade** when she was given the chance to take on an old orchard and allotment-size veg plot near her family home in Wales. Now she had to transfer her windowsill growing skills to a huge area. We follow her progress month by month



**NEW  
SERIES**

**F**ebruary is a tricky time in the kitchen garden. The very last of the previous season's crops are fading fast and it is too early to plant very much anew. In my case it was not helped by the fact that for much of the month the garden vanished under a foot-deep blanket of snow in some of the most extreme weather for decades.

It was, however decidedly pretty. The branches of the apple trees were outlined in snow, reaching and twisting like a black and white scribble against the soft grey sky. Goldfinches scrambled around the remains of the lemon balm looking for the little black seeds and the blackbirds fought over what remained of the crab apples. Walking in a winter wonderland, certainly, but not much gardening happening.

However, in the welter of mid-season planting, weeding and digging, it is often easy to forget the value of planning ahead. I could see where last year's cabbages and potatoes had been so the first job was to set out a three-year crop-rotation so as to avoid growing related crops on the same piece of ground in successive years and reduce the build up of pests and diseases. In my dreams, crop rotations would be four years, but that would depend entirely on whether I got around to digging up the nettle bit at the end of the cultivated area.

This was also a prime opportunity to get out the catalogues, have a good look through to see what I fancied growing and what would actually thrive on acid clay in a high rainfall area. Since these are conditions that have most nurserymen sucking doubtfully on their teeth, a spot of research and experimentation was called for.

I ordered some horseradish thongs from Robinson's Seeds as despite cries of 'Oh God, no, it's rampant! We'll have it forever!' from my father, I am partial to horseradish mashed potato. I wanted to organise some areas of decorative and mostly edible permanent planting so I got some artichokes – a green one and the purple-tinged 'Romanesco'. To the growing heap I added multi-coloured radishes (radishes were the first vegetable I ever grew, aged about four, so I was pretty confident there), spinach 'Bordeaux', some interesting squashes including 'Sweet Dumpling', cucumber 'Cucino', sweetcorn 'Rising Sun' and a whole variety of seed potatoes.



## Polytunnel is cleared

On the practical front, the main tasks revolved around tidying up in the polytunnel and removing the dead plants left over from the previous autumn. Out came the tomato stalks and wiry cucumber stems left over from the previous owner and when the weather warmed up a bit, I belatedly cut back the summer-fruiting raspberries as well. Since summer-fruiting raspberries grow on year-old wood, you are supposed to cut out the canes after the fruit has been picked – round about September. This encourages the plant to send up new shoots that will fruit the following year. Unpruned the previous autumn, the plants looked tired so I took a chance as I might get a small crop, even if it was a bit later than normal.

Near the edge of the polythene I noticed that the chives had started to sprout again, becoming less towards the dry and dusty central path. My small greenhouse at home has tended to stand empty once the tomatoes have gone, but looking at these brave green shoots I realised that, if kept undercover, perennial plants will need to be kept slightly damp even in a Welsh winter. Feeling a little bit daft, I gave it all a drink.

## All hands at the dig

As the weather improved towards the end of the month my partner Chris and I cleared the old cabbages and dug over some of the ground with the aid of a posse of small and dedicated relatives. We manured the future potato patch and put in red onion 'Karmen' and garlic 'Marco' and 'Arno'.

## Mid winter shoots

At this time of year in west Wales there is still an awful lot of winter ahead. Even the snowdrops are only just thinking about coming out and, realistically, it could be some months before tender crops could go outside. But with so much cover available a cheat was available in the form of an early crop of spuds in the polytunnel. Choosing tasty first early varieties 'Duke of York' and 'Red Duke of York' I put them in short trenches and gave them a good watering, with the reasonable confidence that the plastic would keep the frost off and the resulting crop would be a winning result for chilly but cunning plans everywhere. Fingers crossed.



Early potatoes planted in the polytunnel



A posse of small and dedicated relatives helped Naomi dig over the plot

I ordered some horseradish thongs from Robinson's Seeds as despite cries of 'Oh God, no, it's rampant! We'll have it forever!' from my father, I am partial to horseradish mashed potato

## My jobs for February

- Tidy up. Winter is a good time to clear old crops and prepare ground for new planting by digging or sheeting over.
- Take a look at the soil. Adding bulky organic matter like manure will massively improve the structure of sandy soils or heavy clay like mine. Acid soils also benefit from a bit of lime in winter, especially if you want to grow brassicas, but don't manure and lime at the same time as they will react and cancel each other out.
- Plant onions and garlic, choosing varieties that have been specially bred for winter-to-spring sowing.
- If you don't have any fruit trees or bushes, now is a great time to plant some while reasonably priced bare-rooted stock is available!



Garlic sprouting

## Watch out for

- Keep on top of pruning. This is usually best done while plants are dormant, but avoid pruning when it is actually frosty.
- Take care not to overwater potted plants in winter as they will rot, however perennial plants do still need to be kept slightly damp if grown undercover.
- Don't trample on wet ground – it will compact it, squashing all the air out and making it hard for plants to grow.

## Contacts

- Robinsons seeds; [www.mammothonion.co.uk](http://www.mammothonion.co.uk) for horseradish thongs and artichokes
- Unwins; [www.unwins.co.uk](http://www.unwins.co.uk) for squashes and coloured radishes
- The Garlic Farm; [www.thegarlicfarm.co.uk](http://www.thegarlicfarm.co.uk)
- Dobies; [www.dobies.co.uk](http://www.dobies.co.uk) for spinach 'Bordeaux', cucumber 'Cucino' and sweetcorn 'Rising Sun'



# ORGANIC GARDENING

• Bob Flowerdew • Bob Sherman • Edwin Oxlade • Lonnie Morris • Joyce Russell • Tanya Perdikou



You can produce a few oranges in the UK climate, but you'll never be self-sufficient

## The challenge of climate change

Could homegrown produce soon become as important a resource as it was during the war years? **Bob Flowerdew** thinks so and looks at how pressures caused by climate change across the world could influence the range of crops we choose to grow on our plots

I contributed an article to Kitchen Garden, March 09, on how we gardeners should be able to cope with most weather problems brought about by climate change. Mostly because we did so already! Though to be fair the probable increasing randomness and severity of the future's weather will test us. The whole point however was that we already have tried and tested methods for dealing with unfavourable conditions. We know what we can do to mitigate late frosts, drought, flood, high winds and so on. It is all what to some extent we do already, though of course sometimes the difficulties may worsen beyond repair by any measures. However that article was dealing with our tactics and the ways we could cope with each challenge – all much as we do now anyway. But there is another facet we need to consider – the effects of climate change elsewhere will affect what we want to grow, and store.

You see I doubt many of you are entirely self sufficient, I make no such claim myself. My Norfolk crop of citrus is small, I once grew sufficient wheat to make one small loaf and no matter how hard I try, good coffee still eludes me. The occasional pineapple is not difficult but cocoa remains a dream. We all buy something, maybe much, that's 'foreign'. In the longer term 'food security' may become an extremely real issue. But well before then 'food choice' may become much more limited than the cornucopia we have today.

It is not just the cost of importing when currency is devalued but whether or not other countries will be able to send the same crops in the same quantities. We already see reports of how imported winter asparagus is depleting water resources. Banana crops are too easily destroyed by hurricanes, more hurricanes, fewer bananas. One exceptional frost will write off citrus harvests. To say nothing of the possible effects of conflict and strife upsetting trade.



Even the most productive of plots is unlikely to allow a family to be completely self-sufficient



## Filling the food gap



Watermelons are easy to grow given a warm summer

So could we not grow more of our own? Well with very few inputs I have raised many exotic crops. With few exceptions we can already grow many tender crops. Height is more of a barrier than tenderness, pineapples and watermelons are much easier than coconuts.

However there is a problem with home production, it's not the feasibility per se, nor even the carbon footprint, but the returns. For example; okra does not require very rich soil, nor temperatures much warmer than tomatoes and peppers, it's just you get so few pods at a time that to make a meal you need a huge number of plants and thus in turn extensive covered space. Likewise you could grow your own tea, at least a few pots' full – but not your entire year's supply unless you really do own an estate, or at least a huge garden and leave no room for anything else. Your own oranges are no problem, your own orange juice daily is not realistic as the requisite number of trees is huge!

So although we could theoretically grow much more for ourselves, ground space is short, covered space much more so, energy increasingly dear and time limited. Most gardens are too small to grow enough; you just cannot feed your family with everything

home grown. Already we have to choose to grow some and to buy other crops. Even with my huge garden I still buy some things rather than grow them, it's not just space, time is limited, and it's damn hard (and expensive) to have a fresh tomato between January and May.

We, as a country, just as with Dig for Victory in the 40s, could without great difficulty, and actually remarkably rapidly, if we wished, provide many more allotments. Then we could grow many more of our own traditional vegetables and fruits without any complication. Indeed many of us are already doing so. Yet as you well know many popular imported fruits and vegetables will not crop outdoors here, they need cover, and most need heated cover, even tomatoes are on the margin. The most popular fruit sold is the banana – they're possible here, I know I've grown them – tasty, sweet but hardly economic or practical. But even if we could afford the cost, it would be far more difficult, and way more expensive in carbon to make and provide enough big greenhouses to grow even part of our current consumption of this and other tender crops. Individually it might make more sense – but then you get a huge number all at once.



We all grow tomatoes, but producing them in winter is prohibitively expensive for most of us



As a society we have become used to buying such items as bananas all-year-round



If we return to home production, items such as strawberries and asparagus will only be available during our natural season

### Keeping it seasonal

Another facet this raises is that the production of most crops is so lumpy and skewed to a short period each year, the tender ones even more so. We (as a society) have become used to buying most vegetables and fruits almost any day of the year as they are flown in from sunnier countries. If we return to home production then we will all have to accept much more crop seasonality than supermarkets now offer. Strawberries and asparagus for Christmas and tomatoes with Easter salads are not going to be as common as today. Bananas maybe, then no more for many months.

We are going to have a huge change forced on us. Not just more home production but much more storage and processing especially if we want to continue to enjoy some tastes for much of each year. After all as well as forcing early crops and cajoling late ones; it is possible to partially substitute fresh strawberries with their jam, juice, sorbet or frozen fruit. (However all this assumes we can afford to run a freezer, if things get really bad we will have to bottle instead.)

Now during the Dig for Victory campaign they sensibly concentrated on basics such as potatoes and roots, cabbages and onions. These are all relatively easy to store and with care can be had almost all year round. We may not want to grow exactly the same. These could be grown efficiently, locally, organically even, by our farmers and therefore it may be more sensible to plan on growing those they will not offer or where freshness is crucial. Particularly the more labour intensive or risky ones, but especially those with long lead times such as grapes, kiwis and top fruit.





Garlic is a relative newcomer to our kitchens and therefore our plots

### Fresh possibilities

I doubt much garlic was ever planted in the UK during the 1940s, now it's almost a kitchen essential. Improved varieties as well as changing tastes mean chilli peppers are likely to remain popular as plenty enough for any household can be started on any sunny windowsill and grown on in pots. Basil, oregano and other tender herbs are also easy enough and compact enough to be grown likewise. We could easily grow all our own lemon grass, it's no more than a weed and will crop in any frost free window. Storing crops will become more desirable – sweetcorn varieties which can be dried for winter use, the winter squashes and possibly Jerusalem artichokes may all be worth considering where ground is not in short supply. Likewise drying peas and beans; haricots, and such as borlotti and soya beans may become more useful. Space hungry delights such as globe artichokes and asparagus may be pushed out of smaller gardens by 'more worthy' crops. Though of course in the epicure's garden they will be the last to go.

### In for the long haul

One major difference between the 40s campaign and our future is they were in for a short run – we're in it for a very long one. We may well be wiser to start planting more fruit and nuts. Back then soft fruit was seen as an indulgence and top fruit the same and far too slow to come to harvest. With our longer run and better understanding of dietary values fruit will be far higher up the roll in any new dig for victory. As imports become prohibitive our own fruit will be more valuable. Soft fruits, especially 'wonder fruits' with high vitamin levels such as blackcurrants, blueberry, maybe even aronia and goji, could be very profitable especially when turned to fruit leather. Especially useful will be long keeping apples as simple storage ensures almost year round supplies, and these are most productive on larger growing trees than current dwarfing stocks. Other fruits such as apricots may be riskier but far more rewarding investments. Nuts such as hazel produce huge amounts of protein and fats and will become more desirable, walnuts even more so. But planting many trees requires much space.

The biggest problem facing us all will be that lack of space – most gardens are already too small to allow

fully self sustaining production, or even for a big greenhouse. Therefore the wise gardener should already be looking to move to a home with a much much bigger garden. That will at least enable them to grow more if not all of their staples, and have space for hens and a tunnel or greenhouse for those luxuries.



Fruit such as raspberries is well-worth growing and easy to preserve in several ways

Improved varieties as well as changing tastes mean chilli peppers are likely to remain popular as plenty enough for any household can be started on any sunny windowsill and grown on in pots





In future 'growing your own', may have to become 'growing our own'

...set up and run a private co-op vineyard because if the wine is solely for your own consumption then you will all enjoy all your own totally tax free. Now that should offset any depression caused by a deteriorating world situation

### Learning to co-operate

However there is another solution – co-operative ventures. Several families get together to set up a productive garden somewhere convenient with their own labour augmented by a jointly sponsored gardener. Maybe between them they could even run and use a banana and pineapple house. Less intensively and much easier are fruit and nut orchards – a productive one, well fenced, can be made, and well maintained, for little outlay and effort.

But most cunningly; as long as no produce is sold to anyone outside the co-op then many legal complications and restrictions will be circumvented. In particular, one very popular and expensive import is wine. Our wines are now accepted as being potentially as good as any.

Therefore my best advice; set up and run a private co-op vineyard because if the wine is solely for your own consumption then you will all enjoy all your own totally tax free. Now that should offset any depression caused by a deteriorating world situation.



The best investment of all – a vineyard!

NEXT  
MONTH

■ Get better sweetcorn, earlier



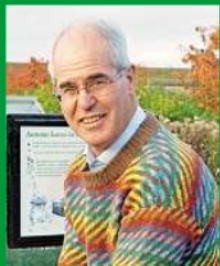
# OVER THE GARDEN FENCE



Two old gardening hands debate some controversial and topical issues

## WITH BOB SHERMAN

Bob is Chief Horticultural Officer for Garden Organic, the charity that promotes organic gardening



## When is it safe to start sowing?

I would love you to think that I am fantastically well organised, surrounded at my West Midlands home in my work hub with charts and records and graphs showing phenological indicators of the 'first day of spring' and lists of everything I have ever grown with details of their performance. The truth is less impressive. Each winter I look in my seed drawers – at least I have some of those – and decide what I shall grow. If I am feeling affable and remember to ask her, I might even include my wife in these decisions. It is politic and definitely in my interests to do that, given that she likes cooking a lot more than I do. This important ritual takes place in January if I am being really efficient, February if I have been a bit too laid back (ie most years). It starts with the back of several envelopes... and doesn't progress much further. This system works fine for me and these scraps of paper guide me through the seasons starting with the earliest sowings. It is very likely that I will, by this time, have already planted garlic and sown some broad beans in November, provided that I had the foresight to have some seed in stock. I like to ring the changes on varieties as a rule to try out over the years as many alternatives as I can, including a good selection of oldies from Garden Organic's Heritage Seed Library. Top bean to date has probably been 'Express' (The Organic Gardening Catalogue), a very accurate handle given its speed of growth. It was

in such a hurry to grow that I had no blackfly and was harvesting (hang on, I'll just check the records...), quite early.

I am greatly assisted by having a little greenhouse at home nestling against the veg plot. This gives me a margin for error. Contrary to some stories, country gardeners do not rip off their trousers in a vernal blood rush and test the soil in spring with their buttocks for warmth. I don't anyway. The temperature at the surface isn't actually a very good guide, as it can vacillate wildly with the weather, so my greenhouse is the buffer against adverse conditions. A warm windowsill would do. So unreliable is our weather that climate change might go unnoticed were it not for good record keeping by someone (not me). Cold and wet destroy many seeds, so I prefer to start as many things as I can in trays under glass, beginning with lettuce, onions, parsley and potatoes chitting in trays in February. Even in March I will probably only commit leeks directly to the soil outside; but then, lacking confidence in Mrs Nature's temperament, I will sow some more in a tray indoors for safety. Only in April do I make seedbeds outside and trickle in seeds of carrots, turnips, parsnips, salsify and others and plant the potatoes.

So, don't be in a hurry to start the season. And don't trust Spring, she's fickle.

### Bob says:

"Contrary to some stories, country gardeners do not rip off their trousers in a vernal blood rush and test the soil in spring with their buttocks for warmth"



## WITH EDWIN OXLADE

Edwin has worked in plant sciences and has grown his own veg for many years. He has an allotment in Belfast, Northern Ireland



To keep this simple I'll confine myself to what's grown entirely outside. Of course if you have a greenhouse or a propagator the questions take on a slightly different meaning and the answers will not be the same. That might be confusing.

My general experience is that while it may often be, depending on the year and in an entirely unpredictable way, too early to sow, it is rarely too late to sow. By that I mean that if you leave things late you won't suffer any dire consequences, and you may not be that far behind your more adventurous neighbours. My philosophy, born of years of regretted impatience and failed early starts, is now, 'make haste slowly'. I sow and plant later than most people. When the weather and soil conditions look just right I wait another week or two before I start – just to be sure.

There are very few crops that can be sown early, say before the beginning of April, out of doors, in the realistic expectation of an early yield. Peas and broad beans come into this category and it is worth either sowing these in the Autumn to over-winter or as early as February in the new year. These will survive whatever the weather throws at them and they will always make some progress in early spring, giving them a head start when the weather warms up. They are big seeds that make big seedlings that are strong competitors. So February sown broad beans will be earlier, by maybe three weeks, than April sown ones.

But don't expect the same reasoning to apply to other crops. More usually early sown seeds either fail to germinate because it is too cold, or they germinate and grow so slowly that the same seeds sown a month later not only catch up but overtake the early plants because they have enjoyed

uninterrupted growth from the moment they were sown. If you like beetroot, for a summer salad, don't think that by sowing in March you'll get some a month earlier than by sowing on the same date in April. If you're very lucky with the weather you may get your beetroot a few days earlier but, if you're not, you may see no advantage at all.

### Other early birds

As well as peas and beans, it is worth making an early start with some salad crops. Lettuces, despite their frail look are tough as boots. They even prefer low temperatures to germinate, which is why you may have trouble germinating lettuce seed in summer. Salad onions and radishes are also worth starting early.

### Wait for the right conditions

While it may be 'safe' to sow a lot of things early it doesn't follow that it's either wise or worthwhile. It's hard to create good soil conditions when the ground is cold and wet. Seedlings may survive all right but they don't grow, they can't compete with the weeds and they are vulnerable to pests and diseases. Starting too early, I'm afraid, is often a recipe for disappointment.

If I could put a dependable date each year to the first safe sowing day, I could probably make a fortune. But every year is different and it's very easy to get caught out by a late frost. If we're talking about frost sensitive plants like runner beans or courgettes, sown outdoors, it's sheer recklessness even to think about putting seed in the ground until the middle of May. That's why my advice (if I might mix my proverbs) is: 'better late than sorry'.

Edwin says: "My philosophy, born of years of regretted impatience and failed early starts, is now, 'make haste slowly'"



Be patient when it comes to those early sowings

### Your views (Why not join the conversation at [www.kitchengarden.co.uk/forum?](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk/forum?))

Crops sown or planted too early usually struggle to survive and if they do are readily overtaken by those sown/planted at a more appropriate time. I have always kept records of when I have sown and if successful I stick to the date, if unsuccessful change the date. By now I tend to sow at almost exactly the same time every year, weather permitting. Another crucial consideration is that a suitable time for southern England, which is the basis for many sowing times on seed packets and in books, is not appropriate for most other areas of the UK.

*Alan Refail, NW Wales*

We don't sow early either – sometimes it can pay off, but in most cases our later sown seeds overtake those sown earlier by other gardeners on our site.

*glallotments, W Yorkshire*

Keep records and learn how to use your plot by trial and error, every patch of soil and its micro-climate create their own variations. Not much help for your first year but worth setting off this way.

*Geoff, Forest of Bowland*

I do keep a diary of what I plant and when and what the weather, temperature and so on is like at the time, so that helps me decide how early or not to get things started. As we get very late frosts here I usually err on the side of caution.

*Plumpudding, Stocksbridge, S Yorks*

Sometimes I think studying and listening to your own garden or allotment soil and local climate and flora and fauna and working with that is worth any amount of general advice.

*Nature's Babe, E Sussex*



## VEGAN VEG WITH LONNIE & RICHARD MORRIS



Lonnie and Richard are vegans and tend to a large garden in West Sussex. Lonnie is an enthusiastic grower of fruit and veg and Richard a keen cook. Each month they bring you ideas and inspiration from their plot and kitchen

# Preparing for the season ahead

Lonnie and Richard are getting their seeds ordered and propagator ready in anticipation of a great growing season ahead

**E**arly in the month, I have a good clear out in the greenhouse. I dispose of any plants that didn't make it through the winter and prepare those that will go out to give us early crops as soon as the ground is warm enough. Then I make sure the propagator and warming mat are functioning. I clean my pots and potting bench (if Lorenzo, my cat, will move off it!) and I clean the glass to make the most of every bit of sunshine. There, ready to go!

Richard and I have spoken at length and made choices for the coming year. My objectives are to sow seed that will give us crops over the longest period (that means choosing the right varieties) and have crops across all the seasons (last year I made the mistake of planting everything that came through and not leaving space for winter crops that would go into the ground later). Patience is a virtue, so I am told. I'm learning. So, with that in mind, I choose from the many catalogues some of which that have dropped through the letter box and others that I've sought out on the internet.

If we are to believe the supermarkets, we only eat about a dozen sorts of vegetables. As a vegan, I'm often asked in dismay "what do you eat?" to which I reel off a list of vegetables, staples and grains many omnivores haven't heard of. I believe in having a very varied diet and the supermarkets can't cater for that as well as the allotment can. I would advocate growing crops that are either expensive to buy or difficult to source and varieties to give all year round crops thus saving air miles. I also like to grow varieties that give me pretty colours and shapes on the plate.

## Getting the seed orders in

I'm buying most of my seeds from Nicky's Nursery again and some from the Vegetable Seed Store both on line, the latter having a link to [jungleseeds.co.uk](http://jungleseeds.co.uk), which has a great selection of unusual things to grow. Bean enthusiasts wishing to grow different and interesting varieties will enjoy browsing [beansandherbs.co.uk](http://beansandherbs.co.uk) all of which are organic. The Real Seed Company also has some interesting seeds such as Rapini, a sort of calabrese that grows late into the winter, which is always welcome, Ulluco, a tuber reminiscent of water chestnuts that I haven't seen anywhere else and four different varieties of quinoa, a useful staple in our diet. Then I'm usually seduced by the emails from Seeds of Italy offering a good range of grains suitable for the plot as well as unusual fruits such as the physalis, a cherry-sized fruit clothed in a paper lantern. And I can never resist just a few impulse purchases from Marshalls and whatever else drops on the mat. I hate to admit that the pictures attract me and lure me into the pages of the catalogue. I hope you're not that shallow!

As usual I write our seed list with rotation in mind, basically keeping the family groups together but certainly making sure nothing goes in the same place for a few years. Bed three got the lion's share of the compost and a layer of straw this winter so the heavy feeders will be planted out into that. This will include the sweetcorns that were amazingly succulent last year ('Fiesta') and some squashes. Although I always choose something new, I was very taken with the Uchiki Kuri!



Seeds are being bought as it is almost time for sowing



Lonnie likes to grow something a bit different each season, such as physalis



Lonnie says: I'm buying most of my seeds from Nicky's Nursery again and some from the Vegetable Seed Store both online, the latter having a link to [jungleseeds.co.uk](http://jungleseeds.co.uk), which has a great selection of unusual things to grow

### Looking for blight resistance

In my choices, I'm also mindful of the blight problem I suffered last year so I'm selecting blight resistant tomatoes including 'Ferule' and growing potatoes 'Orla' for earlies and 'Cara' for maincrop. Worth noting you can get an idea when blight might be about by watching the forecasts online. The 'Smith period' method plots the minimum temperature and humidity and at [blightwatch.co.uk](http://blightwatch.co.uk) you can see when it's sweeping across your part of the country.

I will have to decide if I am putting potatoes into the ground or growing them in sacks. The latter has a number of benefits; firstly they don't then disturb the soil structure, secondly Richard can much more easily turn a bag out if he wants them and lastly they won't succumb to slug and eelworm damage.

### Oca was okay

The oca were fascinating last year but did not provide many meals (and they only managed a third place on the show bench – the judges probably thought they were under-developed Jerusalem artichokes!).



Rhubarb chard is great for winter cropping

### Loving the brassicas

Calabrese being one of my favourite vegetables, I'm trying 'Tender Green' which will start cropping in June and late 'Samuri' to go on well into the winter. Because the supermarkets only think we want Brussels sprouts at Christmas, I'm growing 'Oliver' which should crop by August and 'Wellington' to last me through to next spring. If you enjoy growing your own leeks, you might try 'Shelton' for an early crop and 'Bleu de Solaise' to withstand the worst the winter can throw at them. Because I want more available in the winter, I'm sowing black cabbage, also known as kale 'Cavolo de Nero' and some colourful varieties of Swiss chard including rhubarb chard which lasts well in cold winters and 'Bright Lights' which is more colourful but will not withstand a long cold spell.

### In the kitchen with Richard

It's not completely unproductive in the plot at present. As well as all the stored goodies there's still leeks and Jerusalem artichokes making their way onto the kitchen doorstep and the Welsh bit of me starts to stir with February falling between two Welsh feast days, St. Dwynwen's Day on 25 January (St. Dwynwen is the Welsh patron saint of lovers) and St. David's Day on 1 March. When leeks and patriotism come together in the kitchen, it can only mean one thing. It's time to make Cawl. Best described as a leek broth, many will tell you that mutton or bacon are traditional ingredients. Given the relative scarcity of meat historically, it's probably safe to assume that these were later additions or occasional treats – though not for the sheep or pig involved, obviously.

The final result can be eaten either as a single course, as a chunky leek and potato stew, or as two courses, straining the liquid off to serve as a clear broth, then eating the vegetables separately.

## IN THE KITCHEN WITH RICHARD

### CAWL CENNIN FIGAN (SERVES 4)

4 tablespoons vegetable oil  
6 leeks, trimmed and cut into 1-2cm (½in) pieces  
3 medium potatoes, coarsely diced  
3 large carrots, finely diced  
1 litre vegetable stock  
salt, to taste  
2 tablespoons chopped parsley

### METHOD

1. Brown the leeks, potatoes and carrots in the oil
2. Add the stock and simmer covered for 30-40 minutes until vegetables are tender
3. Season with salt, if using, add the parsley and cook for a further couple of minutes
4. Serve with warm crusty bread



Richard says: It's not completely unproductive in the plot at present. As well as all the stored goodies there's still leeks and Jerusalem artichokes making their way onto the kitchen doorstep





**UNEARTHING  
THE FACTS  
WITH  
JOYCE  
RUSSELL**



## A perfect partnership

In this series **Joyce Russell** puts some common gardening principles to the test and this month it's companion planting – growing plants together that can benefit each other – or do they?

**S**ome things about gardening have been proved beyond doubt. Some things it's easy to observe with our own eyes and other things we have to read or be told. I know that there are things I do in the garden because I've always done them that way and if it works, I'm reluctant to change to a different route. I always plant marigolds next to my tomatoes, for example. It keeps whitefly away and helps plants crop better – or so we are told! But does it? Or is this a myth? And come to think of it, what about other companion planting dos and don'ts?

There are clearly good reasons why some plants might influence others: root excretions, or strong scents that deter pests, or even tall plants depriving light from near neighbours are some obvious thoughts. But what about the ones we don't understand. Can one plant help another grow better? Or can another one slow a neighbour's growth?

Once again, there's nothing definitive about this column, but I thought I'd make a few observations in the garden to see if some of those companion planting rules hold up.



Here poppies have been sown beside broad beans



## Marigolds first

French marigolds are known to secrete something from their roots that kills nematodes. They are also supposed to enhance the growth of tomato plants and to repel whitefly.

I planted a row of French marigolds right next to a block of tomato plants and this is what I observed:

The tomatoes right next to the marigolds were the most productive plants. They stayed cropping for longest and were least prone to disease – coincidence maybe, but something to work with and continue to observe in future years.

Having set up the test, I had no whitefly at all in the polytunnel last year. This can't be entirely down to the marigolds because I've grown them in previous years and although the tomato plants usually don't get infested, the strawberry plants do. Perhaps the previous cold winter got rid of the pest, who knows. I then began to think about other years. It occurred to me that the strawberry plants were often a good way from the marigolds. In fact the further away they were, the more heavily they were infested. Certainly something to work on in the future – and perhaps to plant nasturtiums as a second line of whitefly (and aphid) defence.

## Poppy power

Poppies rob goodness from the soil. That's maybe why they inhibit growth in vegetables nearby. They can even eradicate weeds from a patch if they are sown thickly enough – the problem is that they can become weeds themselves popping up everywhere that seed falls.

I left self-seeded poppies to grow in patches among the broad beans and observed the effects. I must say that the row of beans looked extra pretty and the crop was excellent, with no sign of inhibition. But then, on reflection, the beans do produce their own nitrogen.



Poppies growing through a row of beans



Poppies did seem to affect the growth of spouting broccoli plants

## Can poppies affect purple sprouting broccoli?

Where poppies grew next to brassicas, there was a different story. The purple sprouting broccoli plants that were closest to the poppies never reached a good size. Those further away were a darker green, grew much bigger and cropped well. It was hard to see what else could have had this effect, as, in other regards, conditions were the same.

## Pumpkin time

Sweetcorn and pumpkins grow well together. The pumpkins provide ground cover to keep soil damp, which benefits the corn. Corn stalks provide support for the rambling pumpkins.

Some years I plant these two together and some years I don't.

In general, the two plants grow well together giving two good crops from the one plot. The ground cover does generally benefit the corn, but there are some problems to watch out for:

- If soil dries out it is really hard to water under the pumpkin foliage and it can be hard watering the corn without soaking the pollen in the large cup shaped pumpkin flowers – wet pollen doesn't set fruit well. If pumpkins are grown alone, you can just water around the planting point.
- Corn stems are brittle and a climbing pumpkin can pull them over, or even break them.



Pumpkins and corn are good bedfellows

## Pumpkins and potatoes

They are supposed to be kept away from potatoes, but take a look at the picture of this monster pumpkin growing in the potato patch! The spuds were pretty good as well.

In theory, two greedy feeders might compete, so neither one does well, but the potato patch is often one of the best fed beds in the garden. If potatoes are grown in long ridges and pumpkins are grown in the troughs in between, there is no reason why the two shouldn't make good bedfellows. Just make sure that the pumpkin foliage runs where you want it to, so it doesn't swamp the potatoes.



A monster in the potato patch

There are clearly good reasons why some plants might influence others: root excretions, or strong scents that deter pests, or even tall plants depriving light from near neighbours are some obvious thoughts



## A bit of mint

Strongly scented herbs may well repel pests such as aphids and butterflies. Some herbs seem to enhance the growth of plants nearby.

I tried growing peas with a thick patch of mint in between. I must say I was worried about this experiment because I love my peas and didn't want to reduce the crop in any way. I needn't have worried. The rows of peas next to the mint did spectacularly well. I've hardly ever seen so many big pods per plant. The rows further away were fine, but they didn't have as big a crop as the ones grown near the mint.

The only problem could be in keeping mint under control – the roots soon spread through a bed and shoots pop up all over the place.

(Another problem was that I didn't enjoy all of that great crop of peas – rats nipped off the pods and took them to eat under some pumpkin leaves.)

## ...and fennel

Fennel is supposed to have a harmful effect on many plants. Maybe it's the deep roots that rob the soil, or the fragrance that somehow seeps out to detrimental effect. I don't know. My Florence fennel patch usually does very well and certainly didn't stop runner beans growing as well as those that were further away. But I have noticed, over several years, that a clump of bronze fennel manages to keep even the rampant growth of lemon balm at bay. The lemon balm comes to within 30cm (12in) or so of the fennel, but it won't come closer than that. Maybe it knows something that I don't!



Mint seemed to enhance the number and quality of pea pods

## Strawberries and spinach

These are supposed to be good companions, so when some strawberry plants in pots put runners down near a row of spinach I thought I'd see how things progressed. The strawberries flowered too early and were touched by frost so I nipped off the flowers. The plants looked healthy enough and soon produced more flowers. At this time the nearby row of spinach plants was past its best so the row was

removed. There were no obvious signs of advantage to either plant although both grew well. But when the strawberries started to crop, I thought they did particularly well, producing heavy crops of juicy fruit. Was this down to the spinach? Or perhaps it had more to do with removing the first flush of flowers? I don't know, but it's not a hard experiment to duplicate so I may find out more in 2011.



Spinach and strawberries appeared to flourish when grown together



Fennel keeping lemon balm at bay

The rows of peas next to the mint did spectacularly well. I've hardly ever seen so many big pods per plant. The rows further away were fine, but they didn't have as big a crop as the ones grown near the mint



# NORFOLK GREENHOUSES

The Original Safety  
GREENHOUSES  
& GARDEN BUILDINGS

**DIRECT FROM**  **FACTORY TO YOU!**  
Established 1973

Made in England – No import duty, No middleman **SO YOU PAY LESS!**

## ALL NORFOLK PRODUCTS ARE SAFETY GLAZED:

- Electro-Galvanised Steel Frames • All models have Ultimate Clear as Glass Semi-Rigid Ultra-Violet Stabilised Special PVC Safety Glazing with 5 Year Clarity Guarantee • Translucent Twin-Wall Insulating Roofing Panels • Sliding Doors & Vents • All panels supplied pre-cut to size • All sizes are approximate • All delivered to your home flatpacked with full assembly instructions

**FROM JUST £129**

**SAFETY GLAZED**



ALL 6FT 6" HIGH

**5 YEAR**  
Manufacturer's Clarity  
**GUARANTEE**  
on ULTIMATE Clear Safety Glazing

**PLANTS NEED LIGHT!**  
We use glass-clear side panels – Some manufacturers cut costs by using twin wall polycarbonate that diffuses light, retards plant growth and looks unsightly.

Semi-rigid clear uPVC safety glazing – No worries about broken glass! Translucent twin wall roofing for added insulation in winter and shade in summer. Double sliding doors for extra wide opening – up to 30 inches – ideal for wheelbarrow/wheelchair access – sliding window at rear for through ventilation. DIY assembly.

## ULTIMATE MODELS

- £129** JUNIOR 4 (48"x70")
- £179** POPULAR 6 (71"x70")
- £229** SENIOR 8 (95"x70")
- £289** PRO 12 (140"x70")

– All sizes approx. All models 70" wide x 6'6" high.

Model illustrated SENIOR 8 £229

## GET AN EARLY START WITH LOW COST PROPAGATING UNITS



**WALL GARDEN £59**

Nearly 6ft high! Ideal for seeds and tomato plants. 3 levels + floor. 71" high x 44" x 17" deep.



**TOMATO HOUSE £49**

3 levels + floor 47" high x 44" wide x 17" deep.

**STARTER HOUSE £29**

2 levels + floor 32" high x 32" wide x 17" deep.

**ALL Norfolk Propagating Houses have clear semi-rigid PVC and twinwall panels on galvanised steel frames with sliding doors**



**2 for £49**

## COLD FRAME

Twin wall sides for insulation and clear top for light. Access by sliding top. 32"x32"x16 1/2" high.

**ALSO JUMBO COLD FRAME £44**

59" long x 31" wide x 23" high.

**CLOCHES**  
Galvanised steel frame. Clear semi-rigid PVC with twinwall and panels. 59" x 19" x 13" high.

**£17.50**

**Twin Pack £32**

**ALSO JUMBO CLOCHE 43" long x 23" high Normally £25 NOW £18 FOR LIMITED PERIOD**



**COMPLETE WITH ANCHOR PEGS**

**SPACE SAVER JUST £99**



**6ft! HIGH!**

**BACK PANEL INCLUDED**

Galvanised Steel Frame clad with semi-rigid clear uPVC Safety Glazing plus insulated twin wall. 2 levels of moveable rails for standard trays + floor space for gro-bags etc. Single sliding door. Fit against wall or fence. Size 70" x 24" x 70" high.

## The Original NORFOLK STANDARD GREENHOUSE

**FROM £69**

**ALL MODELS 78" HIGH**  
(sizes are approx.)  
**BUDGET £69**  
4x6 (48"x70")

All sizes have galvanised steel frame with single sliding door (21" opening). Covering is clear flexible PVC sheeting (Don't confuse with Polythene that goes cloudy!) that is Ultraviolet treated and supplied on a roll for seam-sealing with special tape provided. NO SPECIAL BASE REQUIRED! – Bury long tails of the PVC sheeting into the ground for sturdy anchorage.



The following have rear opening window  
**6x6 (71"x70") POPULAR £99**  
**8x6 (95"x70") SENIOR £119**  
**12x6 (140"x70") PROFESSIONAL £149**

## PATIO HOUSE



**JUST £139**

Ideal for patio or where space is limited – Just 4'4" square (46" x 46"). Features sliding door and sliding side vent. 2 corner shelves and a high level shelf. Galvanised steel frame with white PVC trim. Clad with semi-rigid clear ultra-violet stabilised glazing with a 5 year clarity guarantee. Translucent twin wall roof panels provide insulation and shade in summer. Height 6'4" at centre, 5'9" at eaves.

## STEEL FRAMED GREENHOUSE STAGING

**JUNIOR** holds 12 trays. 31 1/2" wide x 16" deep x 31 1/2" high.

**£8 Twin Pack £15**

**SENIOR** holds 18 trays. 31 1/2" wide x 16" deep x 44" high.

**£14 £26**

**PRO** holds 24 trays. 44" wide x 16" deep x 44" high.

**£21 Twin Pack £40**

## NORFOLK GARDEN ROOMS - for extra space - from £179

All models are 70" deep, height front 70", height back 84". Double sliding doors and sliding window any side. Now with 2 corner shelves. White PVC frame trim.

**6 (70" wide) £179**

**8 (92" wide) £199**

**12 (139" wide) £249**



Photograph is Garden Room 12

## NORFOLK RAISED BEDS from £25

Sturdily constructed from rigid box section uPVC hollow-airspace cladding boards that provide insulation to the soil. In brown tongue & groove effect. No maintenance, no painting. Rot-proof and built to last.

Available in 4 sizes:- 1000x700mm **£25**  
1400x700mm **£29** 1400x1000mm **£32**  
1400x1400mm **£35** Height all sizes 290mm

## LONGLIFE SHEDS

**4'x 3' Pent Roof Height 6ft (1895mm)**



## IDEAL FOR THE SMALLER GARDEN!

- NO MAINTENANCE
- ROT PROOF
- NO ANNUAL PAINTING
- BUILT TO LAST
- EASY TO ASSEMBLE
- IF YOU MOVE, TAKE IT WITH YOU

Sturdily constructed from rigid box section uPVC hollow airspace insulation cladding board in brown tongue & groove effect.

Translucent twin-wall roofing panels for light and insulation in either ridge roof style or pent roof style (slightly inclined so water runs off). Door has clasp for your security padlock. All parts pre-cut to size and pre-drilled with instructions for DIY assembly on any flat surface. Size 4'x 3' (1225x200mm) in Ridge or Pent Roof. Size 6'x 4' (1788x1225mm) in Ridge Roof only. All sizes are approximate. Rear Shelf included with all models - Extra Shelf Kits available at £20 each



**6'x 4' in Ridge Roof only**

**£199**

Height 7ft (2135mm)

## PARAFFIN GREENHOUSE HEATERS

**£29 ULTIMATE**

5.5 ltr tank. Burns 50/70 hours. 1250 watts heat approx. Two twin duplex burners.

**£19 MAJOR**

3 ltr tank. Burns 30-60 hrs. 625 watts heat approx. Two twin duplex burners.

**£9 LITTLE MARVEL**

120/125 watts heat. 3 pint tank burns for 100-150 hours.

**FULLY GALVANISED TANKS – NO RUST!**

**24 HOUR ORDERLINE 01638 510568**

Showground at STONDON MOTOR MUSEUM, STATION ROAD, LOWER STONDON (NR. RAF HENLOW), BEDS. (OPEN 6 DAYS inc Bank Holidays - Closed Fridays) Tel: 01462 850339  
**FACTORY SHOWROOMS OPEN MON-FRI 10AM to 4PM (Closed Bank Holidays)**  
AT NORFOLK GREENHOUSES LTD, CHISWICK AVENUE IND. EST. MILDENHALL, SUFFOLK AND HOLMBUSH MANUFACTURING, STENNACK ROAD, ST. AUSTELL, CORNWALL.  
All products supplied flat packed for DIY assembly. Allow up to 28 days for delivery. 10 day money back period – You must write/fax Customer Services (01638 714715) to return goods (must be unused and in original packaging). Please note, we do not refund the delivery charge on returns.

Orders by post send coupon to: **Norfolk Greenhouses Ltd. (Dept LKG102)**

**Chiswick Avenue, Mildenhall, Suffolk, IP28 7AZ**  
**OR FAX TO 01638 714715 attention Dept LKG102**

PLEASE SUPPLY \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ TRIM COLOUR (if applicable) GREEN ☐ WHITE ☐

I enclose cheque/P.O. for £ \_\_\_\_\_ or my card

No is \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_ Maestro/Solo Issue No. \_\_\_\_\_

Security Code (Last 3 digits on back of card) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

POST CODE \_\_\_\_\_

Your Phone No. (for delivery purposes only) \_\_\_\_\_

Quote Dept. **LKG102**

DELIVERY charges for U.K. mainland - Orders up to £0-£49 £6 £50-£99 £10 £100-£199 £15 £200-£249 £20 £250+ £25 (Telephone for quote to all other areas).

Reg No. 1338257

Northern Ireland Order Phone 028 4065 0065 and Fax 028 4065 0065

Quote LKG102

Website [www.norfolk-greenhouses.co.uk](http://www.norfolk-greenhouses.co.uk)

This advertisement produced by [www.laveryrowe.com](http://www.laveryrowe.com)



# NATURE NOTES

## FROM THE PLOT

This month, **Tanya Perdikou** of The Wildlife Trusts explains why it is important to save what remains of our peat bogs and how gardeners can help by making the switch to peat-free composts



## Preserving our peat bogs



Picture: Bruce Shortland

Sundews are one of the many specialised plants that thrive in acidic peat bogs



Astley Moss, a fragment of Chat Moss managed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust, is protected, so sphagnum mosses do survive here, although it is not as rich in life as virgin mossland

**P**icture a scene. A dragonfly hovers across an expansive landscape. Although it looks barren, where a deer picks its way across, the ground wobbles like jelly under its hoofs. Here is a world where life is thriving just below the surface, a wetland habitat covered in sphagnum mosses that are so acidic they have been used to dress the wounds of soldiers, and have even preserved bodies for more than 2000 years.

The dragonfly advances towards a plant whose coral pink, tentacle-like arms twinkle with drops of sap – an irresistible meal. This will also be the final meal of the dragonfly, which will find itself the victim of this carnivorous plant, the sundew. The sticky sap holds fast to the insect's body, which will be slowly dissolved by the plant to supplement its diet with added nutrients.

### A habitat in peril

This is one of countless dramas that unfold among the UK's peat bogs every day. These unique and fascinating habitats have taken thousands of years to form, and as they do so, they trap vast amounts of carbon, making them one of our most important natural resources in the quest to reduce our emissions. The North West's peat bogs alone have the potential to absorb the carbon emissions of over 46,000 people every year, but if left to degrade could release the emissions of 334 million people.

The qualities of our peat bogs should be admired, valued and protected. Tragically, many of them are now entirely devoid of life, many metres stripped from their surface, left to degrade and emitting many tonnes of carbon in the process.

These unique and fascinating habitats have taken thousands of years to form, and as they do so, they trap vast amounts of carbon, making them one of our most important natural resources in the quest to reduce our emissions





Chat Moss, already stripped of many metres from its surface, is at risk from further peat extraction

## Chat Moss – a case study

"The North West's lowland peatbogs once stretched across Cheshire, Cumbria and Lancashire." Says David Crawshaw from the Lancashire Wildlife Trust. "Today, less than two percent is left. And we are still digging them up."

David has been heading up the Trust's campaign to save Chat Moss. Only tiny fragments of this peatland, which used to cover 1100 hectares, remain, and even these are under threat. Lancashire Wildlife Trust has been campaigning to prevent horticultural manufacturer William Sinclair from extending its license to harvest peat from the site for an additional 15 years.

David added: "Within the Chat Moss area, Lancashire Wildlife Trust manages two sites, Astley Moss and Cadishead Moss. We are working hard to improve the condition of the sites – between them they currently support some species of sphagnum moss, along with dragonflies, water voles, newts and sundews. But peatlands cannot survive in isolation like this – drainage in the surrounding areas means there is a constant threat of them dying out. The sooner peat extraction at Chat Moss ceases, the better."

## There's still time

Saving our peatlands and all the specialised wildlife which relies upon them will take effort, but with the combined action of conservation groups, government, industry and individuals it can – must – be achieved.

In March 2010 the Government pledged to phase out the use of peat in compost materials by 2020. And while Lancashire Wildlife Trust fights to preserve Chat Moss, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust helped to form the Yorkshire Peat Partnership earlier this year, with the aim of boosting peatland restoration efforts in the Yorkshire uplands. Although it may take decades to restore peat bogs to anything like their former glory, wet

and healthy heathlands immediately begin absorbing carbon, so this partnership and other peatland conservation efforts have a key role to play in a low carbon future for the UK.

## Gardeners take action

It's us as consumers who can really assert ourselves as guardians of the UK's ancient peatlands. The compost industry is already under pressure to phase out peat – if the market for peat-based products became less profitable, this would provide real impetus to the process. So there's a clear choice for nature loving gardeners who want to help prevent the complete disappearance of the UK's precious peatlands. Go peat free. Not just when buying bagged compost, but when buying pre-potted plants too.

The standard of peat free composts has been improving, and in 2010 consumer watchdog Which? awarded 'best buys' to three non-peat based composts, after trials showed they gave the best performance. There's also the option of maintaining a compost heap. This not only reduces kitchen waste, but can attract a huge variety of wildlife to the garden, from slow worms to hedgehogs.

## Find out more

The Wildlife Trusts manage around 2300 nature reserves in the UK, so there may well be a peat bog worth a visit near you. Contact your local Wildlife Trust to find out. Details can be found at [www.wildlifetrusts.org/yourlocaltrust](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/yourlocaltrust).

For the latest update on the Chat Moss campaign visit the Lancashire Wildlife Trust website [lancswt.org.uk/index.php/save-chat-moss.php](http://lancswt.org.uk/index.php/save-chat-moss.php). To find out more about the Yorkshire Peat Partnership visit [yppartnership.org.uk](http://yppartnership.org.uk).

The Wild About Gardens website provides a guide to building a compost heap [wildaboutgardens.org/habitats/compost-heap.aspx](http://wildaboutgardens.org/habitats/compost-heap.aspx).

## Attracting invertebrates

One of the joys of having a garden pond is the variety of invertebrate life this can attract. Although during the winter months it may not be so easy to spot them, below the surface of the water miniature monsters are growing in many a backyard pool. The common blue damselfly is one of the UK's most widespread invertebrates, so it's not uncommon to spot them in the garden. With their gossamer wings folded and a slender, blue and black striped body, it is easy to see how this invertebrate might fool people into believing in fairies. But these fairies start life as feisty larvae. The common blue lays its eggs underwater, and when the young hatch they prey on whatever they can get hold of, including bloodworm, water fleas and even tadpoles. Common blues tend to spend about a year in this larval stage, so next time you pass by the milky brown water of your garden pond, consider the life and death struggles that might be unfolding within.



The common blue damselfly is a regular visitor to garden ponds

Picture: Richard Burkmar

## Further information

There are 47 local Wildlife Trusts across the UK, the Isle of Man and Alderney. The Wildlife Trusts are the largest UK voluntary organisation dedicated to conserving the full range of the UK's habitats and species whether in the country, in cities or at sea. [www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)





# Early crops French style

The English don't often admit to the French getting it right, but where growing early vegetables back in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was concerned they certainly knew their onions! **Rebecca Pow** visits a nursery which has rediscovered old techniques

It was the market gardeners around Paris that developed methods using cloches, frames and copious quantities of readily available horse manure. They cornered the market both in Paris and London in producing early crops of carrots, lettuces and many other vegetables that were able to command high prices when no one else could compete. The system involved using a range of bell cloches and frames set on steaming hot beds of stable manure and growing crops utilising the 'free' heat generated.

A century on, with a little contemporary tweaking we home gardeners could apply similar techniques and produce our own early crops ready for harvesting long before many of our more traditionally grown crops are ready and it even allows crops to be grown right through the winter! There are two basic options for the system; growing directly into the compost heap, or growing in a purpose made hot bed in the vegetable plot.

## TOP TIP

### ■ Producing early plants

To get plants large enough to transplant, start them off on a windowsill indoors, or sow about 25 seeds under a bell cloche on your hot bed. When they are well established transplant these to new cloches or frames positioned on the heated bed, using around three to six plants per cloche depending on its size and giving the plants plenty of room to grow and develop. Once you get started you can keep the whole cycle going by continually sowing more seeds.



Victorian lantern cloches are highly prized and very decorative. Replicas are available from mail order companies







Compost heaps generate useful heat as bacteria break down the waste

### Early and winter crops from your compost heap!

As all gardeners will know, what makes the waste material thrown onto the compost heap really break down apart from the worms at work, is the heat generated by bacteria. It is this heat that can be harnessed to speed up plant growth in the depths of winter when most plants and seeds would not normally be cajoled into any obvious growth in open conditions.

Chris Smith, who runs Pennard Plants in Somerset has been experimenting with various methods of the old 'French Gardening' technique for growing early crops with very successful results. He demonstrated some of his ideas at Chelsea Flower Show last year, and has put them into practice on a larger scale this winter in the walled garden where the nursery is based. He told me: "By putting glass frames over the compost heap I was able to generate temperatures of up to 10C (50F) even in the frosts of last winter. I sowed late French beans which I was picking in early November followed by lettuces that I was able to harvest in February. There will be at least a 30F difference between the temperature outside and inside the cloche."



Rebecca meets Chris Smith who has become an expert on the hot bed growing technique

**Chris says:** By putting glass frames over the compost heap I was able to generate temperatures of up to 10C (50F) even in the frosts of last winter



Alkathene hoops support crop covers

### How it works – Step by step



**1** Firstly the old compost heap may need turning and mixing to re-ignite the heating process



**2** Take off the very top layer of the heap and level. Position a cold frame or bell cloche over the prepared surface; push down gently



**3** Cover the manure with 5-8cm (2-3in) of top soil or multipurpose compost before planting or sowing



**4** Put a lid over the top and within nine to 12 weeks the crops will be ready to eat

If you don't have a glass cloche available improvise by using two litre plastic bottles complete with screw tops and the bottoms cut off to form mini cloches for individual plants. Or use larger 5 litre plastic bottles that can be used for up to five plants. Once you have harvested one crop sow some more seeds in its place or transplant seedlings to grow on elsewhere.



## Heat up your veg patch

Alternatively, you can make a hot bed in an area of the vegetable garden by following the simple steps below:



**1** Choose a sunny, well-drained site which gets as much light as possible and dig a hole or trench 30cm (1ft) deep and the same width with a spade or fork



**2** Add 23cm (9in) of fresh manure to it. This can comprise of horse manure or a mix of composting materials including kitchen waste, weeds, grass, chicken manure and so on



**3** Cover the manure or mixed composted materials with a further 7.5cm (3in) of fine soil and water thoroughly



**4** Position a bell cloche, or other cover over the area and leave for seven to 10 days to allow the fermentation processes to get going



**5** Once the soil has warmed up thanks to the bacterial activity within the manure, you can add plug plants or seeds of your preferred salads or vegetables

Salad crops work extremely well as Chris has discovered: "Traditionally in the early French system they would put in three cabbage lettuce, such as butterheads, with a Cos lettuce in the centre. The thought behind this was that the cabbage lettuce would be harvested first, leaving the Cos to grow on later.

"It's such an easy system and the cloches or frames help to protect against pigeons and slugs and there's really no need to water. If you do think a little water is necessary water over the outside of the structure, and if it gets too hot during the day just prop the cloche up with a stone to let the air in but drop it down again at night."

Chris says: In the early French system they would put in three cabbage lettuce, such as butterheads, with a Cos lettuce in the centre. The thought behind this was that the cabbage lettuce would be harvested first, leaving the Cos to grow on later



## Suitable crops to grow using either method

Salad crops are ideally suited to growing in this way, particularly some of the smaller lettuce varieties: 'Little Gem', 'Vaila – Winter Gem', 'Rosetta', 'Valdor', 'Winter Density', 'Tom Thumb', 'Unrivalled.' Also land cress, mizuna, mibuna, corn salad and other salad leaves that can be grown outside in winter, but which will be much more succulent grown in this hot-house way. Early spring onions and radishes will also thrive grown like this as well as carrot, such as the small variety 'Paris Market' and herbs including parsley and coriander. All of these can be sown from late October onwards, which puts a whole new light on winter gardening not to mention winter eating! It is also a great way to give an early start to cauliflowers, and don't forget fruit says Chris:

"An excellent early crop of strawberries can be raised using the hot bed method by planting some one-year-old potted strawberry plants in September or early October and covering until March."

In fact it is worth experimenting with a range of crops. Use the hot bed method from September right through until March and keep a succession going. Even after this, provided the heat can be maintained, the cloches and frames can be used to produce an earlier than normal crop of cucumbers, courgettes and tomatoes:

"There is really no resting time when gardening like this!" laughs Chris, who runs courses in February and March to help newcomers learn all about growing their own food, including growing the hot house way.



Early strawberries can be harvested even sooner using hot beds



Tender crops such as courgettes can be sown significantly earlier using this method

### DID YOU KNOW?

'Cloche' is a French word meaning 'Bell'. (The modern gardener has expanded the original meaning of the word cloche to also mean 'tunnel covering'). 'Bell Jar' cloches were used by gardeners in the Victorian era and were originally made from hand blown glass.

### Structures:

A range of covers can be used for producing early crops on heated beds:

- Glass or plastic Victorian style bell jars/bell cloches
- Glass or plastic frames/tunnels – bought or home made constructions
- High barns/low barns (glass panes erected on a wire frame, but these are quite a fiddle to erect)
- Arches made from plastic hose with clear plastic over the top
- Plastic bottles, 5 litre, and 2 litre (bases removed, screw tops in place)

Anything which allows light through and helps to retain heat is suitable for covering a hot bed, such as these barn cloches below



### Forthcoming courses at Pennard Plants:

- Grow Your Own Food: February 24th and March 10th 2011
- Grow Your Own Fruit: April 2nd 2011 10.30am – 3pm, £30 including a home grown lunch. To book email: [Sales@pennardplants.com](mailto:Sales@pennardplants.com) or call: 01749 860039. For more information visit [www.pennardplants.com](http://www.pennardplants.com)
- Pennard Plants, The Walled Gardens, East Pennard, Somerset BA46TU: Also grow a range of heritage and heirloom vegetable seeds.

### Suppliers

A range of suitable cloches, bell jars, tunnels, covers and frames can be found at:

- [www.haxnicks.co.uk](http://www.haxnicks.co.uk)
- [www.suttons.co.uk](http://www.suttons.co.uk)
- [www.activegardening.co.uk](http://www.activegardening.co.uk)
- [www.thegardensuperstore.co.uk](http://www.thegardensuperstore.co.uk)





## THE PATCHWORK PLOT WITH SUE HINTON

Sue Hinton and her husband David Saunderson wanted to grow as much veg as they could in a small area of their suburban plot in Hook in Hampshire so they adopted an intensive bed system of growing

**NEW  
SERIES**  
Part 2



### What is 'Square Foot Gardening'?

This system started in the USA, pioneered by Mel Bartholomew, and it has become one of the most efficient and popular ways to grow large crops of fresh produce and doesn't waste valuable resources or space. (Check out [www.squarefootgardening.com](http://www.squarefootgardening.com)). At a basic level the technique involves dividing up a raised 1.2mx1.2m (4ft by 4ft) bed into 30cm (1ft) square sections. Each square contains a different crop grown at close spacing. As soon as a crop is finished it is replaced with another one. It is an intensive growing system that relies on a good soil and ideal placement of the bed in good sunlight to produce optimum harvests.

# Let planting begin!

**T**he structure for the new garden was completed on schedule by the end of March. The weather was so cold though that planting couldn't start in earnest but token plantings took place to keep up the momentum.

From what we had read, to get the best out of square foot gardening we needed quality soil to which we would constantly add nutrients to cope with more intense planting, continual picking and the quick replacement of harvested crops. Our crops were to be planted closer than normal, for instance five lettuces in a square foot and this reduces the need to dig and weed. Until we were well under way though, we did need to weed the topsoil that was delivered and we used a small indoor rake to till the surface.

To get going, garden centre radishes, brassicas, turnips, onions and beetroot were all planted and the first crop of radishes picked by the end of April – ooh the taste! I bought a seed storage container and filled it with a wide selection of seeds that we wanted to grow. Some square foot gardeners stick to salad crops but we wanted to grow a little of a wide variety.

### Starting seeds indoors

Various seeds were sown in Rootainers (deep pots) and placed into a propagator. Smaller numbers were sown than you would use for row plantings and as soon as they had germinated they were put into the greenhouse to grow on. For hard to germinate seeds like parsnips we put them into a seed sprouter that you would use for seeds used in stir fries and salads. We enjoyed a 100 per cent germination success rate with parsnips using this method. They were then planted into Rootainers and when the seedlings were big enough planted them up into the raised beds. A neighbour saw me doing this and commented that parsnips don't enjoy being transplanted. Too late! I had used a dibber and made sure the root went well down so it is fingers crossed now that we get a lovely straight root! They certainly look healthy and I have since seen parsnip seedlings sold in a major garden centre chain. So let's hope!

### Bean bed prepared

As for the bean trench, I remembered what my father always did and that was to dig in the autumn ready for next year's plantings and continually put in decaying matter and old newspapers. One of the main reasons I want to grow my own vegetables is because of my father's beans and the fact that beans from the greengrocer or supermarket are definitely not as delicious as fresh from the garden. So in our boxed bean trench we emptied the soggy contents of the womery, ideal for that purpose, peat-free compost and topped it off with weed-free top soil.

Much to my surprise the beans germinated and sprouted much too quickly in the propagator and soon had to be planted out. As Jack Frost was still about we used some glass to protect them at night. Wanting to maximise on the goodness of the trench we have planted sweetcorn in among the beans and French beans at the front of the trench. Having learned lessons this year, next year we will establish the corn first, then plant the runner beans and then the French beans at the front of the trough.

Once the beans were established we gave them regular feeds of diluted liquid from our wormery and also washed them down if blackfly was spied. As much as possible we use liquid from the wormery and the Bokashi bin, both need to be diluted with water, backed up by organic feed.





The bean box is enriched with Sue's 'wormpost'

## Bokashi bins

Compost that comes from a Bokashi bin is suitable as a soil improver. It is a source of nourishment for micro-organisms that grow in the soil. These establish themselves on a permanent basis in the soil, multiply and then dominate the harmful bacteria, viruses and fungi that are present. It is great for 'composting' all kinds of kitchen waste too. It is kept in the kitchen and then as you need to dispose of waste you put it into the bin and every so often you cover the contents with special bran. This makes Bokashi sweet smelling and avoids obnoxious smells in your kitchen.

Each time we plant up or replant a square we bury some Bokashi, or worm compost, whichever we have available, covering up with compost, soil improver or seedling compost and then sowing or planting as appropriate.



Liquid feed is drawn from the Bokashi bin



Some early strawberries were grown undercover and moved outside after the last frosts

## Crops galore!

By the end of May produce being grown included – peas, mangetout, shallots, onions, spring onions, turnips, beetroot, kohlrabi, pak choi, carrots, spinach, kale, Brussels, cabbage, parsnips, salad leaves, rocket, radishes, broad beans, runner beans, tomatoes, corn, strawberries, parsnips, a selection of tomatoes, selection of courgettes, potatoes, a dozen herbs, cucumbers, blueberries, Kiwi and there were still squares to fill!

The Access greenhouse was a wonderful acquisition for our garden. During the winter it is used to protect our fuchsias and bring on broad beans and sweet peas and coupled with the new polytops during the spring, we will use it to harden off the seedlings. In the summer it is home to the tomatoes, cucumbers and strawberry plants. Originally I had intended that the strawberry plants would be in hanging baskets in the garden but they were happier in a nice warm greenhouse and we enjoyed our first pickings early in June.

Three varieties of tomatoes were planted – 'Moneymaker', 'Gardener's Delight' and 'Garten Pearl'. They were planted into different containers – a growing bag in the greenhouse, a Stewart's hanging basket watering pot (for the 'Garten Pearl') and two 'Moneymaker' in the centre of one of the raised beds to see how they fared. Having been used to bountiful crops of tomatoes from an allotment polytunnel it will be interesting to see how we crop in the garden.



It's early in the season but crops are beginning to grow away well in the fertile soil

## Controlling pests

With so much produce prone to pests, we controlled them by using biological control – the new Nemasys Grow Your Own mix. We drenched them all every two weeks with the nematode solution. Grow Your Own was especially formulated to help people like us – small gardens, new to vegetable gardening and not easily able to identify the pests until they had attacked. So many times in the past we have lifted our carrots, onions and turnips only to discover that they were riddled with fly and inedible.

Slugs are not a problem in our garden either. We have used Nemaslug for years and that, coupled with the fact that we have a walled garden, has rendered us slug-free. When we do see a slug it is usually after we have bought plants from a garden centre.

## Harvesting begins

The secret of harvesting leafy salads is to cut leaves regularly. As veg, such as turnips, carrots and radishes, come to an edible size, pick and eat them making space for later crops to expand. Our first stir-fry consisted of thinnings of brassica leaves, mangetout, broad bean sprouts and beetroot leaves.



Sue starts to harvest some lettuce leaves



Later in the season good-sized beetroot is harvested from the little plot



# PICK OF THE CROP

PART  
2

In the second of her three-part series, Gaby Bartai shares the highlights of the latest crop of seed catalogues that are currently bursting through our letter box

**A**s we move into the main season for seed catalogues, there are choices to be made. The 'earlies' – the big, glossy household-name catalogues, with page after page of new introductions – are compulsive reading for most gardeners, but before the turn of the year most of us are only window-shopping. Now, though, with the main crop of catalogues in, it's time for some decisions. There are, by my count, 35 of them, and while they're all inspirational, the choice is exhausting as well as exhaustive. There's not space here to do justice to all of them, but I'll try to give you a flavour of each of the catalogues, hopefully saving time (and trees) by finding the best catalogues for you.

Next month I'll be back with a look at the 'late entry' catalogues – those which, growing much of their own seed, wait until the harvest is safely in before putting anything in writing – and the growing number of online seed sources. I'll also be highlighting the best of the new gardening sundries; increasingly, the bigger catalogues sell much more than seeds.

## Catalogue choice

The seed business is not a level playing field; there are big companies with the resources to obtain exclusive rights to the most exciting of the new varieties, and smaller firms who maintain a standard seed list with few changes from year to year. This is an entirely good thing. The quieter, more traditional companies have solid lists of tried and tested varieties – varieties which, because they make no headlines, are often dropped by the big-name catalogues to make space for the new introductions. 'Small' catalogues often have much wider ranges than the 'big' ones and with lower overheads, their prices can be very competitive. The story about the traditional seed companies is that there is no story; they just continue to do what they've always done – and do it well.

Unwins have, in recent years, focussed increasingly on ornamentals, leaving the edibles to sister company Marshalls, but the catalogue retains a small range of standard vegetable varieties, many in the company's patented 'Grosure' seed range, and a selection of fruit and potatoes. Kings Seeds offer an excellent range of

mostly traditional varieties in an attractive catalogue that is a favourite with allotment gardeners, and Terwins Seeds offer another good list of standard varieties, with no frills or pictures but a fair amount of choice.

Edwin Tucker's catalogue has always been a comprehensive, businesslike affair; they also produce a catalogue for professional growers, and it shows. New introductions this year include lettuce and endive 'pills' for ease of sowing; this is coated seed, but they stress that it is not treated – much of it is in fact organic. They have added a further 40 varieties to their already comprehensive potato range, and there's also a new 500g 'taster pack' range to enable customers to try out new potato varieties in a small and inexpensive way.

Victoriana Nursery Gardens produce an interesting seed list which is deliberately stronger on breadth than depth; they say that they do not list variety after variety of the same vegetable because they have grown everything they sell, and only list the best. They also produce a separate, extensive list of top and soft fruit.

## Vegetables of distinction

The Simply Vegetables catalogue from Plants of Distinction is one of my favourites, with selections ranging from heritage to novel to brand-new, and introductions of a calibre to rival any of the big-name catalogues. There's squash 'Autumn Crown', specially bred for the UK climate, which has a distinctive melon flavour, and courgette 'Piccolo', with strikingly unusual stripy fruit, like foreshortened baby marrows. 'Rambling Red Stripe', billed as a 'next generation' basket tomato, produces beguiling

red fruit streaked with green; the plants can also be grown as conventional bush tomatoes. 'Gusto Purple' is a medium-hot pepper which has shown great promise in British trials, even outdoors, and 'Dancer' is a high-yielding 65-day aubergine-producing fruit in a lovely deep purple-pink.

New leek 'Northern Lights' has leaves which flush to an eye-catching bright purple during the winter months. It is British-bred and very winter-hardy, cropping from December right through to spring. Another ornamental contender is Simply

Vegetables' own improved strain of the lovely pointed purple cabbage 'Kalibos', which makes a smaller head with more delicate leaves. 'Bingo' is billed as 'probably the prettiest of the climbing beans', with marbled shells and strikingly bright beans which can be used for drying or eating fresh. It has, they say, a true Continental flavour, but is easily grown in our less than Continental climate. Runner bean 'Enchanted' has huge red and salmon-pink flowers, and its fleshy pods set much more readily than other varieties, even in hot weather.



Cabbage 'Kalibos' produces compact heads



Courgette 'Piccolo' looks like baby marrows



Climbing bean 'Bingo' is very pretty



## Seeds get real

'There's really no need to buy new seed every year – you can just save your own.' The Real Seed Catalogue have been telling us this for years, but it still comes as a shock to find it next to the glossy marketing of some of their competitors. Their agenda is grassroots seed production, and to that end they offer both old and new varieties – those that have stood the test of time, and those which they think will be the heritage varieties of the future. Everything is open-pollinated, and they include seed-saving instructions with every order.

This year's new introductions include 'Huauzontli', which has got to be worth growing for the name alone; that's going to earn you some kudos on the allotment. It's an easily grown summer leaf green from South America; the tall plants stand hot dry weather well and make a striking feature on the plot, as the lower leaves turn red as they age. 'Oskar' is a dwarf pea variety from the Czech Republic, growing to only 30cm (1ft) tall, with a short, sweet season. It's

recommended as a prequel to your main crop, since it is so early that it is finished by the start of summer. 'Red Flesh' mild tricolour radish is a beautiful large winter radish; the 7.5cm (3in) diameter radishes have a red-purple centre which radiates out to a bright green outer ring, and then to an almost white skin. Tasty but not too hot, it is good raw in salads or cooked in soups and stews.

There are four new oriental greens: 'Tai Sai' white stem leaf pak choi, from Japan, has been bred for its unusually long, tender white stems. 'Bekana' Chinese salad cabbage makes large open heads of yellow-green leaves. More like a pak choi than a cabbage, with juicy white midribs and tender leaves, it can be used raw in salads or cooked in stir-fries and stews. 'Yukina Savoy' leaf green makes rosettes of very dark green savoyed leaves with a good flavour, and 'Tsoi Sim' Japanese shoots and leaves is an easy catch-crop green, ready in just four weeks, with vividly green leaves and flowering shoots that can be eaten raw or cooked.



Chinese salad cabbage 'Bekana'



'Yukina Savoy' forms a rosette of tasty leaves



'Tsoi Sim' is ready to eat in just four weeks



Pea 'Oskar' is an early compact variety



'Red Flesh' is a colourful winter radish



Attractive show potato 'Blue Belle'

## Growing for showing

For exhibition growers, the 2011 season is already under way. Some products from the Medwyn's of Anglesey catalogue, like their leek bulbils, were in fact posted out in early December, but they also sell seedling plants at several stages, so you can take over the growing at whatever stage your facilities can cater for – and, of course, seeds, so you can grow your own winners from the off.

They have three new stump-rooted carrots, 'Match', 'Attilio' and 'Katrin', all tipped as potential red-card material, a new, very sweet Japanese-bred beetroot called 'Cardeal' and, from the same breeder and too new to have a name yet, turnip 'SC9-303'. There's an improved selection of parsnip 'Duchess', and their potato range is extended with 'Casablanca' and 'Blue Belle', both of which featured in Medwyn's gold-medal-winning Chelsea display in 2010.

Robinson's – 'the home of the Mammoth Onion' – offers seed right across the vegetable range, but their speciality is selected strains of vegetables for showing, and they also sell exhibition onion, leek and celery plants at various stages of growth. They've added the 'Yard Long' climbing bean to their range (beat that!); there are a new pair of chards called 'Rosa' and 'Virgo', and they have new chillies 'Medusa' and 'Masquerade', both producing very hot, upright fruit ripening to red and purple respectively. The nursery is open to callers in April and May, when they have one of the largest ranges of vegetable plants for sale in the UK.

Select Seeds offer a carefully chosen range of varieties with proven form on the showbench, mostly F1 hybrids, with the emphasis very firmly on those vegetables which feature in the schedules. Shelley Seeds offer varieties which are 'showbench winners as well as tasting great on the plate', and this year they have extended their range of exhibition and standard varieties with a new range of smaller packets of seed of classic, easy-to-grow varieties.



## Organic news

The organic seed companies continue to consolidate their ranges, closing the gaps in organic coverage and bringing the holy grail of an all-organic paper catalogue that bit closer. The Organic Gardening Catalogue are redesigning their seed packets this year for both their organic and non-organic ranges; the new packets are colour-coded for vegetables, flowers, herbs and green manures and have clearer and more detailed sowing instructions.

Additions to their organic seed range include a lovely chard called 'Flamingo Pink', lettuce 'Rubelar', with burgundy-tipped leaves, and carrot 'White Satin'. 'Amarillo' is a 'new' – actually very old – South American pepper with 'reasonable' cold tolerance, producing sweet cone-shaped fruits which ripen to yellow. 'Pink Wonder' is a beautiful tomato with big, slightly ribbed fruit up to 200g (7oz), with pink skin and flesh, and French bean 'Brown Dutch' produces egg-shaped brown beans with a nutty flavour which are perfect for soups and stews.

The Soil Association symbols continue to proliferate down the margins of the Tamar Organics catalogue; some sections are now all-organic, and most are mostly organic. New entries include 'De Barbentane', an old French variety of aubergine, tipped for growing in British conditions as it is both well-sized and early-fruiting. Parsnip 'Aromata' is a sweet variety selected for flavour, and pepper 'Gilboa' is a new

orange selection of 'California Wonder'. Tamar's potato range is all-organic and now includes old favourites 'Belle de Fontenay' and 'Ratte' as well as the heritage varieties 'Salad Blue' and 'Highland Burgundy Red'. They also have an all-organic selection of top and soft fruit, including the new strawberry varieties 'Christine' and 'Judibel'.

Suffolk Herbs continue to offer a very good range of organic seeds and an entirely organic-friendly range of sundries, and continue, mysteriously, to omit any mention of this on the catalogue cover. Surely, in 2011, organics is no longer the seed preference that dare not speak its name? The cover does admit to their usual excellent ranges of unusual vegetables, baby leaf varieties, oriental vegetables and (of course) herbs. Edwin Tucker offer a good number of organic varieties, and another source of organically produced (though uncertified) seed is The Real Seed Catalogue.

A further, vast resource for the organic gardener is Association Kokopelli. Based in France, the association was set up to circumvent European regulations banning the sale of unregistered seed varieties. Around 1000 varieties are sold on a commercial basis; the remainder of the collection – some 1500 varieties – is available free to association members (join up at [www.kokopelli.asso.fr](http://www.kokopelli.asso.fr)) The collection consists of heritage varieties from all over the world, all produced organically, with wonderful names and a compelling sense of provenance.



'Amarillo' is not new but a heritage variety



Lettuce 'Rubelar' has burgundy-tipped leaves

## Top for tomatoes

Simpson's Seeds specialise in tomatoes and peppers – page after page of them. This year's new tomatoes include 'Tasty No 1', which was very popular with those who came to their tasting days last summer – though the catalogue includes the indignant disclaimer, 'We did not choose this name!' 'Black Cherry' is a 'deep, deep red' cordon variety, while 'Golden Crown'

is a very prolific, vibrant yellow cherry tomato which was also very popular at tastings.

The catalogue also offers an increasingly good range across the rest of the veg plot. Mizuna 'Red Knight' has large purplish-red leaves with contrasting green undersides; also new are mustards 'Red Frills' and 'Red Zest' and pak choi 'Red Lady'. Lettuce 'Deer Tongue' has very

unusual, thick, crisp, tongue-shaped leaves. Simpson's list modern breeding alongside heritage varieties – their criteria for inclusion is not antiquity or modernity but taste – and much of their seed is produced at their Walled Garden Nursery, which is open between April and September for the sale of vegetable plants, hardy perennials, seeds and sundries.



Prolific 'Golden Crown' has a good flavour



'Tasty No 1' proved popular in taste tests



'Black Cherry' produces attractive dark fruit



## No gloss, just seeds

Wallis Seeds are another of the quietly traditional seed companies, with a text-only catalogue and a vegetable range which is short on gloss and big on substance – but they also list a good number of interesting new varieties. There are four new aubergines – white 'Ballon' and 'Snow White', purple-red 'Puffa' and pale purple 'Prosperosa' – and no less than seven new onions, including the highly rated mildew-resistant 'Santero'. There's kale 'Scarletto', with curly red leaves, a lime-green cauli called 'Alverda', and five 'new' heritage tomatoes including 'Striped Stuffer', 'Summer Cider' and 'Red Zebra'. They are also offering club root resistant Brussels sprouts 'Crispus' and 'Cronos' ('Crispus' was introduced by several catalogues last year but had to be withdrawn following a crop failure; it is now widely available).

## Allowable flowers

I know it says on the cover that this is a vegetable gardening magazine, but many veg plots admit a row or two of sweet peas within their sacred precincts, so they qualify for inclusion here. Kings lay claim to the UK's largest range, which this year includes the gorgeous new 'William Wilson', with medium-large salmon-orange flowers on strong stems. Also new are the lovely pastel 'Pink Pearl' and the cerise 'Rosie'.

The other sweet pea specialists are Unwins, whose introductions include 'Tranquillity', with deep cherry-red flowers carried on long stems, which is tipped as a potential showbench winner. They've also got the 'Super multi-flora' 'Aphrodite', which promises up to nine flowers per stem, and the lavender 'Moonlight'.



New sweet pea 'William Wilson'

## Blight beaters

Tomato 'Koralik', which DT Brown decided not to list after having it as their trial variety last year, seems to have performed better for other suppliers. Tamar Organics and the Organic Gardening Catalogue are offering it again as organic seed, and Tamar report that although germination was very slow, the plants were strong and the yield of sweet cherry-sized fruit was 'unbelievable'. Simpson's are also offering

'Koralik' this year, alongside the new blight-resistant contender 'Losetto'.

On the potato front, Tamar have 'Athlete', a new second early which is said to be extremely blight-resistant, with a creamy taste and a waxy texture. Tamar's potato selection also includes organic stock of blight-resistant varieties 'Sárpo Axona' and 'Sárpo Mira' (the latter is also available from the Organic Gardening Catalogue).

## Chilli festival

The Simpson's catalogue has to be the first port of call for chilli lovers; there are no less than 27 introductions to their chilli pepper range this year. 'Aji Russian Flying Saucer' has fruits resembling a patty pan squash, starting off pale green and maturing to deep red, while 'Aji Red Lemon' produces thick-fleshed, crunchy fruits which are large enough to be stuffed and roasted. The wonderfully named 'Aji Pickled Frog', which came top in last summer's tasting sessions, produces dark green fruits which mature to bright red.

New habanero chillies include the very hot 'Fruitburst', which has a strongly fruity aroma

even when green. The pineapple-scented 'Habanero Big Bang' produces some 'monster' fruits, though most are smaller, and the plants can reach 1m (40in). 'Habanero Perfume' has bright yellow fruit with a strong aroma but virtually no heat, so they can be eaten whole. At the other end of the scale, the 'viciously hot' '7-Pot' earns capital letters in the catalogue; in tests last year it clocked up 1,067,286 on the Scoville scale, beating that year's 'Dorset Naga'. It produces pale green wrinkled fruit which mature to bright red and should be approached with caution.



■ For contact details of the companies mentioned please turn to page 93

Simpson's Seeds chilli pepper 'Fruitburst' has a fruity aroma, even when green



# IN THE GARDEN SHED

Innovative products to make your gardening easier in 2011

## Protect that fence

Fence-Pal is a new innovation in treating wooden fence panels within concrete post and gravel board fencing. Fitted in seconds to the fence post and gravel board it is used in conjunction with a sprayer or a brush. While the concrete is protected from unsightly stains from the preservative, a top screen is also included which prevents drift travelling over the fence on to neighbours' property.

With all of the concrete surfaces protected, the time taken to treat the whole garden fencing is significantly reduced. Not only is the job completed more quickly, it's neater and all of those awkward areas are treated between the wood and concrete sections of the fence protecting them from the elements.

Fence-Pal can be used in conjunction with garden sprayers or brushes and once the garden is treated is recyclable. It comes flat packed and measures just 79x36x2.5cm (31x14x1in).

- Fence-Pal costs £9.99 and is available from gardening outlets nationwide.



## A solution to worm casts

The love that many British gardeners have for their lawns is legendary, but since the withdrawal of pesticides that could help them to stop wormcasts some years ago, they have had to put up with this particular problem.

The worms do a splendid job in the soil just beneath the grass roots, but it is a pity that their casts pose such a problem for lawn owners. The lawn's surface quickly becomes soft and spongy underfoot. Deter the worms from coming closer to the surface and your lawn will remain firmer, dryer, cleaner and the grass cover over the winter will be retained. You can also mow the lawn later in the season too.

Soil deposited on the turf surface will quickly clog up and stick to the moving parts of mowers and also accumulate around rollers and wheels and the operator's feet giving them classic 1970s platform shoes in no time! You will no doubt also be aware of the dog and children coming in from the lawn in the autumn to spring months depositing

soil on the kitchen floor that has come off the lawn because of the worm casts. However, a solution is now at hand according to the manufacturer of a new product.

CastClear from The Lawn Company is a worm deterrent product which when applied to the lawn will deter the earthworms from casting on the surface. Never before has a non-pesticidal product been available to amateur lawn owners to deter the worms from casting and ruining the surface of the lawn.

The ideal time for worm cast control is during the months of October through to March. The chemical does not kill the worms, but merely forms a barrier in the soil that the worms will not pass through, as it is an irritant to them. Apply to the lawn every 16 to 30 days for best results. CastClear comes in a handy one-litre bottle that will treat up to 500 sq m of lawn.

- Prices start from £21.50 for the one-litre bottle and the product is available online.

## Stylish bird feeder

Lifestyle website Caroline McGrath has added the cleverly designed Birdball Belle Feeder to their range of garden accessories.

Slipcast in terracotta clay and made in the UK, this clever bird feeder has been designed to hold both large and small fat balls as well as kitchen scraps and fruit. The stainless steel wire fittings keep food in place and will also hold nesting material. The design allows small birds such as tits, sparrows, nuthatches and finches to feed or collect nesting material yet

at the same time deters larger birds.

Easy to clean and fill, the Belle Feeder is also weatherproof and prevents damage to birds feet and beaks that can be caused by wire mesh.

The feeder measures 9cm (3½in) in diameter and comes complete with stainless steel wire, spring, tree protector and detailed instructions.

- The Birdball Belle Feeder costs £17 and is available online.





## Organic slow-release feeds

Greenacres specialise in organic products for the garden and offer a range of organic fertilisers for those people who would prefer to garden naturally. NutraNatural Micro is an organic feed that can be used throughout the garden for every plant. It contains a unique mix of bonemeal, feathermeal, blood meal, humic acid and trace elements, with added beneficial soil bacteria to ensure strong and healthy plant growth.

Unlike organic products that are mainly based on poultry manure, NutraNatural Micro not only gives a quick boost to plant growth, but also provides a long-term, slow-release feed for up to six months. Plants are better fed, more effectively and for longer.

NutraNatural Micro is made from 1mm micro-particles making it extremely versatile, clean and easy to apply. The nutrients are also more readily available to plant roots than many similar products. And, unusually for organic feeds, it has a declared NPK ratio, so gardeners know exactly how much of each nutrient they're adding.

NutraNatural Micro is available in a range of formulations, depending on where it is to be used in the garden and the plants being fed.

Two products in the range are of particular interest to growers of fruit and veg. High nitrogen NutraNatural Garden Feed (15N.4P.10K) is a six-month feed that can be applied from February to July and is the perfect choice for all trees, shrubs, flowers, leafy vegetables and salads.

High potash NutraNatural Garden Feed (5N.3P.13K) also feeds for six months and is perfect for flowering plants, root vegetables, tomatoes and all other fruiting vegetables and for all autumn planting.

Both feeds can also be supplied with added sulphur for ericaceous plants and all plants growing on alkaline soils that are showing signs of chlorosis (leaf yellowing).

- All NutraNatural feeds are available in packs from 500g to 20kg, with prices starting at £13.50; 1kg will treat an area of 20sq m of ground.



## Recycled hen houses

Unwanted plastics in the form of bags and other products have been big news for some time now, so it is good to learn of a company who is making good use of something that might otherwise end up in landfill.

Solway Recycling collects unwanted plastics from agriculture and turns it into useful products such as animal housing and shelters such as hen and pig houses, dog kennels and also raised beds for growing crops as well as many other products.

If you are thinking of keeping some chickens take a look at the Solway Deluxe Eco Hen House (2.4x.76cm/8x2½ft), an ideal starter home for up to four birds or the Deluxe Eco Hen Ark (2.4x1.5m/8x5ft) which will house up to 10 birds. All three of these structures are available in a choice of colours, are easy to clean (they come with the option of a solid or galvanised floor), are easy to move around and virtually maintenance free. Both the Hen Ark and the Hen House can be fitted with a galvanised steel run and 'Superfront Feeding Holes' for an additional cost. The latter allow the birds safe access to food and water without the necessity of accessing the run to top them up.

KG readers can take advantage of a special offer. If you buy either of the products pictured before 3 February 2011 you will also receive a Solway Mini Hen Coop, an ideal starter home for young birds or two to six hens (depending on breed) worth £188 free! Just quote code 3262 when ordering.

- The Deluxe Eco Hen House costs from £320.16 and the Deluxe Eco Hen Ark is from £473.76 (inc. Superfront Feeding Holes).



Buy the Deluxe Eco Hen House with Superfront Feeder Holes...



...or the Deluxe Eco Hen Ark with Superfront Feeder Holes...



...and get the Solway Mini Hen Coop FREE!

## Labelled with love

Following their debut at Hampton Flower Court Show last year, Burgon & Ball have launched their new Giant Wooden Plant Labels to the general public. Measuring 30cm (12in) in length, these stylish, durable FSC hardwood labels are a great way of identifying and distinguishing individual rows of plants and or those in containers. Pre-printed with the names of some of the most popular varieties of vegetables, salad crops and herbs, these smart labels add the final finishing touches to any garden!

The collection runs to 24 different plant varieties and includes such favourites as; basil, parsley, rosemary, sage, thyme, spring onion, tomato, beetroot, broccoli, cabbage and carrot plus many many more.

- Burgon & Ball Giant Wooden Plant Labels costs £2.49 each and are available from all good garden centres or online.

## Suppliers

- Dunure (Fence-Pal); tel: 01214 211001; [www.fence-pal.co.uk](http://www.fence-pal.co.uk)
- Solway Recycling; tel: 01387 730 666 or 01387 730 667; [www.solwayrecycling.co.uk](http://www.solwayrecycling.co.uk)
- The Lawn Company; tel: 08704 427475; [www.thelawnshop.co.uk](http://www.thelawnshop.co.uk)
- Caroline McGrath; tel: 01869 340479; [www.carolinemcgrath.co.uk](http://www.carolinemcgrath.co.uk)
- Greenacres Horticultural Supplies; tel: 01895 835235; [www.greenacresdirect.co.uk](http://www.greenacresdirect.co.uk)
- Burgon & Ball; tel: 0114 233 8262; [www.burgonandball.com](http://www.burgonandball.com)



greenhouse sensation® Vitopod® Propagation

### Propagator and mini greenhouse

**Garden Answers said...**  
**"The ultimate in heat assisted propagation"**

- Control to 1°C within a range of 5°C to 30°C
- Add extra layers as plants grow
- No need to heat your entire greenhouse

Contact us today for your brochure

**Give plants a healthier start**  
 Tel: 0845 602 3774 or visit [www.greenhousesensation.co.uk](http://www.greenhousesensation.co.uk)

## Vertical GrowBag Holder

- Vertical GrowBag for good support, root growth & drainage
- Keeps the Bag off the floor so it's clean, tidy and transportable
- Optional Cane support system for climbers netting etc
- Make holes in the top & sides to plant fruit, vegetables, flowers, climbers etc
- Now in Black
- Buy online or phone to place your order

**£26.99**  
 buy online now

Registered Design & Patents Applied For

[www.kakoi.co.uk](http://www.kakoi.co.uk) 01256 896301

*The Essential Aid to Growing Your Own Vegetables.*

## Enviromesh

*Grow Top Quality Vegetables Without Insecticides*



Agralan Ltd,  
 The Old Brickyard,  
 Swindon,  
 Wiltshire  
 SN6 6QR

[sales@agralan.co.uk](http://sales@agralan.co.uk) 01285 860015

ONLINE DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE NOW!

## Fruit and veg cages

- ✓ Sturdy, high quality construction
- ✓ Quick and easy to assemble
- ✓ Made in the United Kingdom

Our new catalogue is now available - order your free copy today by visiting our website.

[www.wmjames.co.uk](http://www.wmjames.co.uk)  
 phone us on 01308 424111  
 or email [sales@wmjames.co.uk](mailto:sales@wmjames.co.uk)

**HUGE RANGE OF NEW PRODUCTS!**

**William James & Co**  
 Est. 1954

## Calendars to suit every enthusiast!

**FREE UK & EIRE POSTAGE**



**Kitchen Garden 2011 £5.99**

**Kitchen Garden**  
 Just the thing for hanging in the garden shed our latest calendar has been specially designed by gardeners for gardeners – it has lots of room for making those essential notes and reminders as the season progresses to keep you and your plot organised. There is also a great harvest of top tips and timely reminders written by the KG editorial team to help you, your friend or loved one get the best from their crops throughout the year.



**Heritage Railway 2011 £5.99**

**Heritage Railway**  
 Revisit a bygone age with this beautiful 2011 calendar. Train lovers will delight as they watch these magnificent machines billow smoke and take in the picturesque railway scenery this atmospheric calendar has to offer.

**Old Glory**  
 Take in all the sights and sounds of yesteryear with this beautiful selection of 2011 images. Enthusiasts will be enthralled as they admire the immaculately restored old machinery and nostalgic scenes the calendar has to offer.



**Old Glory 2011 £7.99**

**Aviation Classics**  
 12 specially selected images have been beautifully collated in this 2011 calendar from Aviation Classics, focusing on some of the world's greatest aircraft, including The P-51 Mustang and Avro Lancaster.



**Aviation Classics 2011 £7.99**

\*Please note that additional postage prices apply to Europe and ROW orders. For more information, visit our website or call the customer services team via the contact details specified.

To order call **01507 529529** or visit [www.theheritagestore.com](http://www.theheritagestore.com)



# Fantastic plastic

KG regular **Joyce Russell** knows all about the great advantages polytunnels offer growers of fruit and veg. In an extract taken from her new book *The Polytunnel Book: Fruit and Vegetables All Year Round* she offers her advice on buying and construction

**D**o a search for polytunnels on the computer and you'll see that there is plenty of choice out there! Tunnels come in different shapes and sizes; they cost different amounts accordingly and most people want to get the best structure they can, for the best price.

Consider what shape you want – a hooped tunnel, a geodesic dome or a greenhouse-style pitched roof? Some hooped frames have straight sides, so more use can be made of the edges of beds inside. A lot of this is down to personal preference and the suitability of the site. A short, wide tunnel will fit some sites better than a long, narrow one.

Then there are issues like the strength of the structure, especially if the site is buffeted by strong winds. Some frames are made of stronger steel, and base rails or anchor plates can help give more stability. Horizontal bracing bars across each hoop

are also good in windy conditions and they are ideal for hanging things off, or for fixing shelves to. And it is worth noting that if polythene is fitted to a base rail rather than being buried, it is easier to replace.

There is also the choice of cover. Some structures have the option of rolling the polythene up along the sides to provide extra ventilation; a mesh screen covers the opening sections. There's polythene that will last at least four years, or five years, or more. There is bubble polythene for extra insulation (this also performs well in exposed sites) and a milky-coloured one to reduce the effects of too much sun. Some polythene reduces the amount of condensation and hence reduces 'drip' when you are working inside.

Any extras cost more, but they can be well worth it. Don't rush the decision: take all the time that you need to make the right choice.

## Important things to consider when buying:

- Buy from a reputable supplier. Look at websites and ask around before making a choice.
- Choose a frame that is strong enough for the site.
- Get the strongest, longest-lasting polythene you can afford. Replacing polythene is a big job.
- Choose large enough doors to adequately ventilate the space.
- Look at strong doors and catches: buy them, or make them if you know how.
- Look at things like anti-fog polythene, which reduces the amount of condensation inside the polytunnel.
- Anti hot-spot tape is good around joints in the frame, which might snag or tear the polythene. Personally, I don't think it's worth putting it over the entire frame. I have a tunnel where polythene is still intact after 16 years of direct contact with the galvanized hoops.
- Always buy a big fat roll of repair tape at the same time as buying the polytunnel.





## Putting up a classic hooped polytunnel

A lot of people choose to employ someone to put the polytunnel up for them. The usual deal is that the site should be cleared and prepared beforehand. Ask the supplier if they have staff of their own who will put the tunnel up, or if they can recommend someone.

It's not hard to put up a polytunnel. If you have a few DIY skills and a few tools, it's perfectly possible to make a good job of it. It isn't a quick job (allow two days for a small tunnel, longer for a larger one), nor a job for one person (three is a minimum). It's also much nicer to do

the job on a warm, calm day than on a cold, wet or windy one.

The most important thing is to read the instructions very carefully. If there are things you don't understand, it's completely acceptable to phone the manufacturer and ask them to explain. It's worth familiarising yourself with all the parts, and where they go, before beginning any assembly.

**NOTE:** Some polytunnel suppliers (eg First Tunnels) provide a DVD showing assembly instructions.



- 1 Decide when to put the polytunnel up. Choose a couple of days when the forecast is for warm, calm weather. The polythene will fit more tightly if it's put on when warm and so can shrink as temperatures fall. Don't try to put polythene on in windy conditions, as it's likely to flap and snag off any sharp object.
- 2 Use strong posts and string to mark out the site. Make sure corners are square; the two diagonal measurements from corner to corner should be the same.



- 3 Mark out where the foundation tubes will go. These should be at the four corners and at even (usually around 180cm/6ft) spacing along the two sides. You can adjust the spacing slightly if the tubes drive into the ground more easily, but make sure you repeat the same adjustment on the opposite side. (Foundation tubes can be concreted in for more stability, or if using a base rail system.)



- 4 Foundation tubes can be positioned at each end for the door frame, if this is the method you are using; alternatively, holes can be dug for the posts of a wooden door frame.
- 5 Use a block of wood across the top of the foundation tubes so that they don't distort when hammered into the ground. About 45cm/18in of the tube should be buried. The tubes must be vertical (use a level) so that the hoops don't tilt at odd angles when they are fitted.
- 6 If there are any rough edges that might tear polythene, file these smooth before assembling.
- 7 Assemble all the hoops on the ground. If horizontal bars are to be fitted across the top of the hoops, do this at this stage.



- 8 Stand the hoops up and fit them into the foundation tubes.



- 9 Fit the ridge bar and side bracing bars. Make sure the hoops are vertical before tightening up any joints. The structure should start to feel pretty steady at this point.



- 10 Fix door frames. These will be fastened into the rest of the framework according to the manufacturer's instructions.





- 11 Apply anti-hot-spot tape (or be inventive and use something like old nylon tights) to cushion any joints that might have rough edges and cause the polythene to tear.
- 12 If burying polythene, dig a trench 20cm/8in wide and 20cm/8in deep all around the edge except for across the door openings. This might have been done already, in which case skip on to the next step.
- 13 Unroll the plastic along one side of the frame. Make sure there are no sharp objects on the ground to puncture it. Lift the cover (into any breeze) so that it slides over the tunnel.
- 14 If possible, stand a person at each corner of the tunnel to hold the plastic down. A fifth person can go along putting a few shovels of soil into the trenches. The plastic should be as tight as possible.

**NOTE:** Tighten it with soft-shod feet rather than pulling and applying pressure points over fingernails. (If you are using a base-rail system the polythene will not be buried but will clip in place, leaving a flap on the ground on each side.)




- 15 Once the sides are provisionally weighted, each end of the polythene can be cut to fit the doors. The simplest way to avoid bagginess is to cut a V-shaped flap below the central point of the doorway and to roll the flap around a piece of timber. Pulling on the timber, at each end of the polytunnel, will stretch the polythene along its length.
- 16 Keep stretching the polythene and filling the trenches (or use the rail system) to get the polythene as tight as possible.
- 17 Fit the end pieces of polythene around the sides of the door frame. This might involve nailing battens to a wooden frame, or using clips on a metal frame. Try to get the ends of the tunnel as neat as possible, with any folds running downwards so that condensation doesn't collect.




- 18 Fit all doors and catches on the same day.

Extract taken from *The Polytunnel Book: Fruit and Vegetables All Year Round* by Joyce Russell, photographs by Ben Russell, published at £16.99 by Frances Lincoln. Additional photography by Brendan Lyons, Keder and Haygrove polytunnel manufacturers.


## Perfect polytunnels




### FIRST TUNNELS

*the growing season just got longer*

[www.FirstTunnels.co.uk](http://www.FirstTunnels.co.uk)  
 Sales@FirstTunnels.co.uk or call 01282 601253



[www.facebook.com/polytunnels](http://www.facebook.com/polytunnels)  
[www.polytunnelgardening.co.uk](http://www.polytunnelgardening.co.uk)  
[www.youtube.com/polytunnels](http://www.youtube.com/polytunnels)



### SAVE 20 PER CENT WITH OUR EXCLUSIVE BOOK DEAL

We have joined forces with the publishers of Joyce's new book to offer Kitchen Garden readers the chance to buy *The Polytunnel Book: Fruit and Vegetables All Year Round* at the very special price of just £13.59 (UK p&p free).

To take advantage of this super offer either log onto [www.franceslincoln.com](http://www.franceslincoln.com) and log in the code POLYTUNNEL11 where prompted or ring 01235 827702 and quote code 46PTKG.



### THE POLYTUNNEL BOOK FRUIT AND VEGETABLES ALL YEAR ROUND



JOYCE RUSSELL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN RUSSELL



# GREAT READER OFFERS

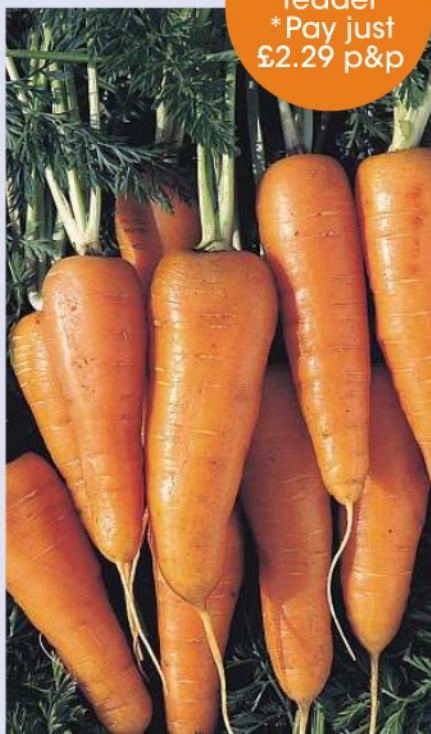
Get your season off to the best possible start with these money-saving offers – exclusively from Kitchen Garden magazine

## Early sowing seed collection

February gives gardeners the opportunity to get in a few early seeds and we've selected some varieties that will help to get you started. It includes pea 'Kelvedon Wonder', parsnip 'Palace', cabbage 'Pyramid', carrot 'Scarlet Horn' and leek 'Musselburgh'.



'Kelvedon Wonder' – a classic early pea



Stump-rooted carrot 'Scarlet Horn'

**FREE\***  
for every  
reader  
\*Pay just  
£2.29 p&p

## Favourite fruiting trio for garden or patio

**THREE  
FOR  
TWO**

These fruit trees will be perfect in large patio containers for a number of years and so you can have your own fresh fruits even if space is limited! These trees are on a dwarfing rootstock and are easy to grow and crop reliably.

We are offering three of the nation's favourite fruiting varieties:

**Apple 'Braeburn':** The top-selling choice on supermarket shelves. Harvest the fruits in October and they will store well until March. A crisp and tangy flavour.

**Plum 'Victoria':** This fruit-tree is a must-have, the yellow-fleshed fruits are best eaten fresh-although the surplus are almost as good cooked.

**Pear 'Conference':** A reliable cropper of large, sweet juicy fruits. Simply mouth-watering.

One tree is available for just £22.95, buy all three – 1 plum 'Victoria', 1 apple 'Braeburn' and 1 pear 'Conference' – for just £45.90 – that's three trees for the price of two!

Delivery from late – February.  
Trees supplied bare-rooted.



'Victoria' is the most popular plum in the UK



Mid-season variety 'Sutton's Seedless'

## Rhubarb crowns

Rhubarb must be one of the easiest vegetables to grow. Being a long-lived perennial plant it needs little attention and is often one of the first harvests of the year. With its huge leaves and bright red leaf stalks it makes a spectacular addition to an herbaceous border, vegetable patch and even large containers on the patio. Our offer consists of two varieties. 'Red Champagne' has beautiful deep red stalks and is a heavy cropping, tasty, mid-season variety while 'Sutton's Seedless' is classic green-stemmed variety which produces a later crop with good yields and flavour.

Buy two crowns of either rhubarb 'Red Champagne' or 'Sutton's Seedless' for just £11.95 or save £4 when you buy both varieties (4 crowns in total) for just £19.90.

**SAVE  
£4**



For reliability, 'Conference' is hard to beat



**SAVE  
£3**

A close-up photograph of a person's hand with light-colored nail polish resting on a large, mature onion. The onion has a thick, golden-brown skin and a prominent root system. It is being held against a background of dark, rich soil and green leafy plants, suggesting a garden setting. An orange circular graphic element is visible in the top right corner of the image.

**SAVE  
£10**



**SAVE  
UPTO  
£13.50**

[illegible]

FEBRUARY 2011 81



# GIVEAWAYS

WORTH  
OVER  
£1023!

To enter our giveaways this month, please complete the coupon on page 93

## Secret weapons for growing-bag gardeners

Growpots – Britain's best-selling tomato-growing sundry, from Garden Innovations – have been further improved to incorporate their unique Water Spike Technology, and the new design picked up a string of awards in 2010. Nicknamed the 'Tomato Grower's Secret Weapon', Growpots promise up to 40 per cent more tomatoes, while saving you water, time and effort. The design stimulates rapid root growth, producing stronger, healthier plants.

Simply place the Growpot on a growing-bag, then cut out and remove the plastic circle from the inner pot and push the Growpot down so the watering spikes pierce the bag. Add compost to the inner pot, then plant up a tomato (or pepper, cucumber etc). Once the plant is established, water into the outer pot, where the watering spikes regulate water flow and ensure that every drop is used. Growpots are made from durable recycled material, and the 'Carry Clip' on every set makes them easy to handle and store year after year. A pack of three costs in the region of £12.99.

Garden Innovations' Water Spike Technology is available to other growing-bag crops too, in the

form of the Growtube (RRP £5.95), which solves the problem of how to water growing-bags efficiently. You just pour water into the bottle 'funnel', and the watering spikes along the tube deliver it straight to the roots. The Growtube comes complete with integral bamboo cane support clips for keeping the plants well supported. It can be fitted in seconds, without disturbing the plants or compost.

For more information on the Garden Innovations range, which is available from all good garden centres and mail order companies, visit [www.garden-innovations.co.uk](http://www.garden-innovations.co.uk) or call 01903 859100.

**We have 50 prizes to give away. The first 25 entries drawn will win a set of three Growpots, and the next 25 will win a Growtube.**



Win Growpots...

...and Growtubes

## Grow your own show

We kitchen gardeners are catered for by established gardening shows, but there's no denying that their focus is on flowers. Now we have a show of our own: this year sees the launch of The Edible Garden Show, a three-day grow-your-own extravaganza, which takes place at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire from Friday 18 March to Sunday 20 March. Whether you're a seasoned gardener who spends every minute on the allotment or a beginner wanting to plant a few vegetables in your back garden, The Edible Garden Show is for you.

Experts and exhibitors will be on hand to provide you with advice on all aspects of gardening, allotments, home-grown produce and healthy eating as well as beekeeping, poultry and home brewing. You will have access to all the essentials, from seeds to sheds and wellies to wormeries, all under one roof. And if you are a budding domestic goddess (or god), experts from the Women's Institute National Cookery School will be on hand to help.

A host of seminars and exhibitions, including practical 'growing it to cooking it'

demonstrations, will ensure a fun-filled and informative event for the whole family. Adult admission is £11, with children (aged six to 16) and senior citizens priced at £9.

For more information about The Edible Garden Show 2011 – opening times, location, admission charges and special offers – visit [www.theediblegardenshow.co.uk](http://www.theediblegardenshow.co.uk) or call 0844 338 8001.

**We have 10 pairs of tickets to give away.**



## Get set, grow!

The garden is frankly inhospitable and the cost of heating the greenhouse can be prohibitive – but we're all yearning to get growing. The Stewart Company have an answer in the form of their new Electric Kitchen Garden Propagator Set. It incorporates a nine-watt heater mat which gently heats the soil inside the unit, allowing propagation to begin in the winter months, so that by the time the greenhouse borders are fit for planting, you have well-established young plants set to give you the earliest possible crops. Also included is a starter kit of pots and trays, together with a rigid crystal-clear cover with adjustable vents. The propagator is 67cm (27in) long, and the two-metre (6ft 6in) cable allows flexibility in positioning it around the home or in the greenhouse.

The Electric Kitchen Garden Propagator Set has an RRP of £32.99 and is available from garden centres, where you'll also find other gardening products from The Stewart Company, which include growing trays, planters, propagation equipment, watering products, and their 100 per cent biodegradable plastic Bio Flowerpots.

For more information visit [www.stewartcompany.co.uk](http://www.stewartcompany.co.uk) or call 0208 603 5700.

**We have 10 Electric Kitchen Garden Propagator Sets to give away.**







**Rivers**  
animal housing

All our animal  
housing is  
manufactured in  
the UK.

**Hand Crafted and Built to Last!**  
Call us now on 01233 822555



Wye House £245 Inc VAT & Delivery

Chicken & Duck House, Runs,  
Domestic Animal Hutches  
All made using pressure treated  
19mm thick shiplap, prepared 45x20mm battening.  
Our housing is designed for even the most extreme  
British conditions.

All fixtures and fittings are galvanised or coated.

[www.riversanimalhousing.co.uk](http://www.riversanimalhousing.co.uk)

**Agents Required Nationwide.**  
Please call 01233 822 555



FREEPOST NAT13224,  
Cresswell, Stoke-on-Trent,  
ST11 9BR

## GREENHOUSES

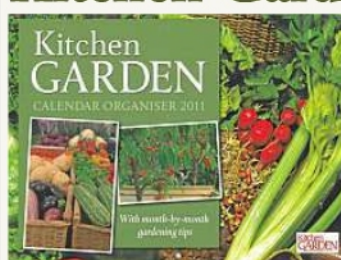
Factory Direct Prices

**0800 093 3295**

Call today for a FREE guide  
to buying a greenhouse and  
all the latest offers.

[www.greenhousepeople.co.uk](http://www.greenhousepeople.co.uk)

## Kitchen Garden



## Calendar 2011

Just the thing for hanging in the garden shed our latest calendar has been specially designed by gardeners for gardeners – it has lots of room for making those essential notes and reminders as the season progresses to keep you and your plot organised. There is also a great harvest of top tips and timely reminders written by the KG editorial team to help you, your friend or loved one get the best from their crops throughout the year.

**01507 529529**

[www.theheritagestore.com](http://www.theheritagestore.com)

**£5.99**

with Free P&P to  
UK and Eire.  
P&P to EUR: £1.50,  
ROW: £2.00

Save up to 20% -  
Book your tickets in advance

the ultimate  
grow your  
own event

Stoneleigh Park  
18th-20th  
March 2011

Call **0844 338 8001** [www.theediblegardenshow.co.uk](http://www.theediblegardenshow.co.uk)

For groups of 10 or more call 0800 358 0058 for offers and promotions

[www.theediblegardenshow.co.uk](http://www.theediblegardenshow.co.uk)







# Prepare to show you care

So you have decided to keep some hens, but what should you do to prepare as the big day comes for you to collect your new charges? **Jane Howorth** of the British Hen Welfare Trust has the answers

**T**here's very little that beats the feel-good factor of using your own produce to prepare meals for yourself and your family, especially when that includes going out to the garden and gathering eggs from your own chickens – and it's a double feel-good factor when those eggs are gathered from re-homed battery hens that have been saved from a trip to the abattoir.

Here at the British Hen Welfare Trust, we have re-homers approaching us from all over the country and from all walks of life, ranging from first-time chicken keepers, to those with years of experience, and ranging from suburban back gardens through to people with acres of paddock.

With around 16 million hens currently living in cages in the UK alone, each bird we re-home is amazingly fortunate, but that does not make the transition from cage to back garden any less bewildering for them. The good news is, whether you are a novice keeper or have clocked up years of experience, there are some simple steps you can take to prepare for your new birds which will help them settle into their new life as quickly as possible. Of course much of the following advice is equally relevant whether you are re-homing ex-batts or buying new birds from a breeder.

The first thing to consider is the amount of space available to you, both outside space in the run and space inside your hen house, as it is important your hens have enough accommodation to allow them to sleep comfortably at night, and to ensure there is room inside to shelter from inclement weather.



**Although healthy, ex-battery hens will have been used to limited space on the farm and may need time to build up their muscles**



**Ex-battery hens soon regain their confidence and healthy plumage once they get used to their new home**

I always advise to buy a house for more hens than you have, as some manufacturers can be mean on the amount of space allowed per hen. For example, when a house is described as suitable for eight, it will comfortably accommodate six, and of course the house must be weather proof and well ventilated, whatever the time of year or conditions outside.

Novices also need to ensure that their set-up is completely protected from the fox, as he will find any gap or low point in your protection, with horrible consequences.

At this time of year, I am often asked if it is necessary to provide heating for hens and, while the most bald may benefit from a heat lamp during persistently freezing weather, in general I consider it a last resort as most birds will cope well with the cold, provided they have protection from the wet and wind.

I also like to make our re-homers aware in advance of the birds' general lack of fitness. This is not to be confused with the birds being ill, as they are almost always in a perfectly healthy condition. From a practical perspective, it is not in the farmers' interests to have sick birds that are not producing eggs, although it remains a common misconception that ex-bat hens are unhealthy.

This lack of fitness means that hens may not be able to roost (and some never do) as their leg muscles are not strong enough initially. It is important to allow them time to rehabilitate at their own pace and I definitely do not recommend placing birds on perches, as it can lead to damaged legs when they jump down. Let them rehabilitate at their own pace and general fitness is usually restored after a couple of weeks.





When they first arrive the hens should be fed on poultry crumbs and can be introduced to pellets later. Inset: These Ex-Bat Crumbs are ideal

Some re-homers find that battery hens can initially be nervous, and they will generally need a little TLC for a couple of weeks as they adjust to their new surroundings. All that is needed is patience and to carry out routine tasks, such as cleaning, in a calm and quiet manner. Talking softly to the hens during this time helps speed up the process of them becoming confident and friendly pets.

Feeding is an important consideration as they will have been fed on a commercial layers mash in the farms, so it is essential to continue with similar feed available for at least four-six weeks. I strongly recommend using the Smallholder Range of Ex-Bat Crumbs; this feed provides the best possible nutrition for re-homed hens, encouraging both feather growth and supporting egg production. My recommendation is also supported by independent

research which shows the high nutrient levels can help newly established flocks settle more quickly too. Ex-Bats Pellets are a pelleted version of the Ex-Bat Crumbs, and can gradually be incorporated in to their feed in an increasing ratio over a period of weeks, birds can remain on a crumb diet, but generally pellets are considered more convenient to use.

For people who have existing chickens, it is vital that you have the space and facilities to be able to keep the new hens separate for a while. The length of time will vary on the number and condition of the birds being merged as well as other factors. We recommend around two weeks, unless there is a cockerel present, in which case they will need at least four to six weeks. We offer bespoke advice on merging hens as everyone has differing circumstances to ensure the birds get off to a good start, so always ask us when you make a reservation.

There is a lot to consider when you take on, or add to, your own chickens, and while it is a commitment that people should be prepared for, the rewards are also very high.

Domestic poultry keeping is one of the fastest growing hobbies in the UK, and understandably when you consider the many benefits, including the satisfaction of producing your own eggs at home, educating your children on the responsibilities of having animals, and perhaps the greatest of pleasures in stealing a quiet five minutes to sit and watch the hens go about their day – a guaranteed stress buster!



It takes commitment, but the rewards for keeping hens are many – far more than just the eggs



Have the living space ready to receive your hens before they arrive and ensure they have plenty of room. Make sure, too, that it is fox proof

## Want to know more?

For more details on the British Hen Welfare Trust and how you can adopt some ex-battery hens log onto [www.bhwt.org.uk](http://www.bhwt.org.uk). There is also an online shop selling chicken related products.

Jane Howorth will be back next month. She visits some 're-homers' to see how their hens have settled in to their new homes.



*for a free range future*



# NEXT MONTH

All the advice and inspiration you need to produce bumper harvests in 2011

NEXT ISSUE  
ON SALE  
3 FEBRUARY

## A-maizing harvests!

Bob Flowerdew explains how to get the best from that summer favourite – sweetcorn



## Tomatoes taste tested

Joe Maiden 'road tests' a selection of tomato varieties both new and heritage



## Bountiful brassicas

All the advice you need to grow cabbage family favourites from Joyce Russell



## Over the garden fence

We discuss raised beds – fad or future?



## Barrels of fun

Andrew Tokely goes back to basics with leeks



## Kitchen GARDEN

Don't miss your copy – order today by handing this coupon to your newsagent



Dear Newsagent, please reserve/deliver my next copy of Kitchen Garden Magazine, starting with the next issue.

Name .....  
Address .....

Postcode .....

## A free gift not to be missed

On the front of KG next month – a packet of super-healthy broccoli 'Green Calabrese'



## A-Z of asparagus

Grow your own delicious crops, plus a special money-saving offer



**PLUS:** • Gardening for beginners • Readers' plots • Beating cabbage caterpillars  
• New products and money-saving offers • Vegan veg • Chickens



# CRAZY PRICES!!

## LIMITED TIME OFFER!!

*"I have been able to turn a useless, messy space into an organised and useful one! Your shelving is practical, durable and strong and I would recommend it to anyone!"*

A. Maskery, Worcester

# 3 SHELVING BAYS

ORGANISE THE CLUTTER  
IN YOUR STOREROOM  
OR GARAGE  
TODAY

ONLY  
**£99.00** ex VAT  
**£118.80** inc VAT  
+ CARRIAGE

- Strong steel frame
- Chipboard decks
- 5 shelf levels per bay
- Money back guarantee  
(conditions apply see online)

**FREE**  
Handy Garden Tool  
Holder Worth £9.95.  
For every order over £50\*  
Quote **KG11** at time of order

\*Excludes VAT & carriage.  
Tools not included

**48** Hour  
Delivery

Offer ends  
07.02.11



Each shelving bay is 1780mm  
(height) x 900mm (width) x 450mm (depth)



Product code  
**MD4B**

UDL= Uniformly  
Distributed Load

### Why Not Add Some Smart Storage Boxes With Our Extra Bonus Offer?

#### A Great Way To Store All Those Bits & Pieces

As a special thank you for your order BiGDUG would like to offer you the opportunity to purchase a set of 15 smart, durable storage boxes for a discounted price of £40 ex VAT, £48 inc VAT. A great way to make the most of your shelving bays.

- Clear polypropylene boxes
- Snap-fit lids
- 24 litre capacity
- 2 fit per shelf



**x15**

\*Extra delivery charge to be incurred is £12 inc VAT,  
260mm (h) x 360mm (w) x 460mm (d).



Code	Description	Offer Price Exc VAT	Offer Price Inc VAT	Carriage Inc VAT	Total Price Inc VAT
MD4B	3 Bays Without Boxes	£99.00	£118.80	£24.00	£142.80
MD4BP	3 Bays With 15 Boxes	£139.00	£166.80	£36.00	£202.80

Carriage is per set, orders of multiple sets will incur an extra carriage charge. Please phone for full details or go online.

Order Now: **0845 966 6000**

Sales Lines Open  
Mon-Fri 8am-8pm.  
Sat-Sun 9am-6pm.  
Calls charged at a maximum of  
2p per minute from a BT landline



# BiGDUG™

BiGDUG Ltd, Units 1-2, Green Lane, Tewkesbury, GL20 8HD

[www.bigdug.co.uk/megadeals](http://www.bigdug.co.uk/megadeals)

No1 FOR LOW COST SHELVING AND STORAGE PRODUCTS

Delivery price is to mainland UK only. All prices correct at time of going to press.

We reserve the right to change products and prices at any time. All offers subject to availability. E & OE. Co Reg No. 5019218. For full terms visit [www.bigdug.co.uk](http://www.bigdug.co.uk).





# Culinary colour therapy

Christina Maxfield brightens up the winter menu with recipes for red cabbage

**R**ed cabbage gets recipes all to itself; although, in terms of taste, it is indistinguishable from white ballhead cabbage, its colour commands special treatment. Cabbages are not actually red, of course, but a splendidly regal burgundy, which in vegetables signals the presence of pigments called anthocyanins. These are, sadly, water-soluble, and they have a particularly unfortunate reaction to hard (alkaline) water, turning an unappetising blue or leaching to a disappointing pinko-grey.

This is why most red cabbage recipes include an acidic ingredient – lemon, lime or orange juice, vinegar or wine. This acts like a dyer's mordant, fixing the glorious colour. In its absence, there are limits on the company red cabbage can keep; its white cousin is, for instance, excellent braised with garlic sausage and dressed with cream, or teamed with potato and cream in a soup, but such recipes are best avoided with red unless you are dining in the dark.

Boiling or steaming red cabbage is also out. The cooking methods that work best are minimal or maximal – stir-fry it quickly, over a high heat, so it keeps its crunch, or braise it very slowly, so it cooks to melting tenderness. Either way, it makes an excellent partner for pork of any persuasion, and for all sorts of poultry and game.

Cabbage tends to get relegated to being one of the also-ran elements in mixed vegetable stir-fries; make it the star, with a supporting cast of flavourings, and you'll be surprised by how well it holds the stage. Stir-fry it with ginger, garlic, lime juice and soy sauce, or with sesame oil, sugar, red wine vinegar, ginger and chilli. For a contrast of textures and flavours, add chestnuts, pine nuts or sesame seeds.

Braised red cabbage is a classic which can be endlessly varied. The consistent elements are a touch

of sharpness – usually red wine vinegar – and a touch of sweetness – brown sugar or honey – and, of course, apples. Possible additional ingredients include onions, beetroot, bacon, sultanas, blackberries, cranberries and redcurrant jelly. Add red wine or port; use cider or apple juice in place of the apples; or vary the sharp element with cider vinegar, balsamic vinegar or orange juice. A huge range of herbs and spices offer themselves, though subtlety is key; the flavour of the cabbage is easily overpowered. Among the aromatics, try bay leaves, caraway seeds, thyme, or a few crushed juniper berries. For a warmer note, try cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, star anise, allspice or ginger.

The other classic is pickled red cabbage, which can be very good or very crude; much depends on the quality of the vinegar. To make good pickled cabbage, the cabbage should be salted and the vinegar boiled, but you can make a version for immediate consumption by mixing together shredded cabbage, vinegar and brown sugar, with the addition of whatever spices you want.

One solution to the cooking problem is not to, of course; finely shredded raw red cabbage makes a lovely addition to winter salads. Combine red cabbage with Chinese cabbage, carrot and roasted peanuts, and dress it with root ginger, red chilli, lime juice and coriander. Put colour into coleslaw by teaming red cabbage with carrot and onion, perhaps adding apple, celeriac, sunflower or pumpkin seeds, sultanas or parsley. Flavour the mayonnaise with caraway seeds or wholegrain mustard, or dispense with the mayo altogether – it does go a disconcerting shade of baby pink – and dress the salad with a mustardy vinaigrette. Alternatively, take the concept of pink coleslaw and run with it, replacing the carrot with beetroot and using a red onion. In the grey days of a British winter, colour is something to celebrate.

## Red cabbage and apple soup

Red cabbage in soup comes up against the problem of colour leakage. It is a regular addition to borscht, however, where the beetroot ensures that everything is pink already; on the same principle, you can add it to soups containing red wine. Add apples and onion and you have braised red cabbage in a bowl, which struck me as a promising idea for lunch on a dark winter's day. The addition of sour cream was a leap of faith, but it works beautifully, and if borscht can get away with being pink, so can this.

### Ingredients (serves 2)

25g (1oz) butter

1 medium onion, peeled and diced

1 tsp caraway seeds

180g (6½oz) red cabbage, cored and finely shredded

1 eating apple, peeled, cored, quartered and sliced

Leaves from a couple of large sprigs of thyme, plus extra to garnish

2 tbsp red wine vinegar

500ml (18flop) vegetable stock

100ml (3½flop) red wine

1 tbsp muscovado sugar

100ml (3½flop) sour cream, plus extra to serve  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Melt the butter in a large pan, add the onion and caraway seeds, and sauté them gently for five minutes.
2. Add the cabbage, apple, thyme and vinegar and cook over a low heat, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes.
3. Add the stock, red wine and sugar to the pan. Bring the stock to the boil, then cover the pan, reduce the heat and let it simmer for ten more minutes.
4. Stir in the sour cream, then check for seasoning and add salt and black pepper to taste.
5. Serve with an extra spoonful of sour cream and a sprinkling of thyme leaves.





## Red cabbage and beetroot casserole

Beetroot is excellent company for braising red cabbage – and both work with orange as well as with apple. You could cook this on the hob if you prefer – but entrusting it to a slow oven is cooking at its most simple and satisfying.

### Ingredients (serves 2)

225g (8oz) red cabbage, cored and shredded  
140g (5oz) beetroot, peeled and cut into batons

1 medium onion, peeled, quartered and sliced

2 tbsp red wine vinegar

2 tbsp clear honey

2 tbsp orange juice

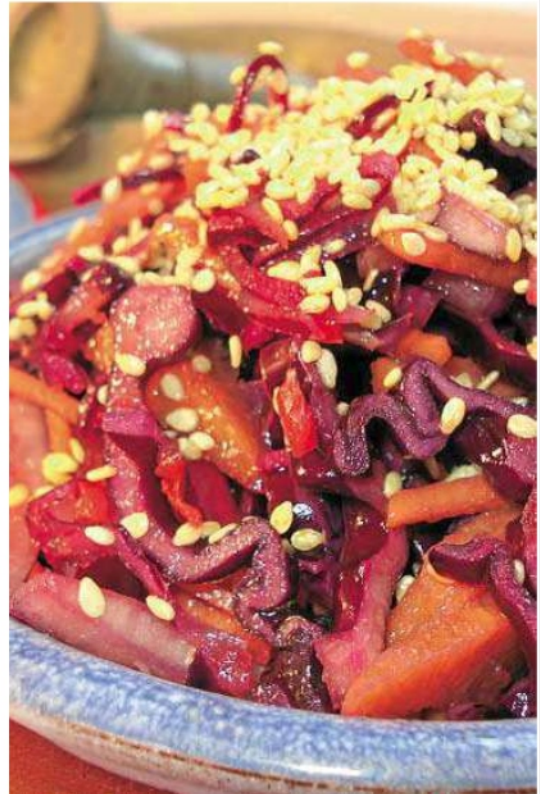
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 small cinnamon stick

2 star anise

20g (¾oz) butter

1. Put the red cabbage, beetroot and onion into an ovenproof casserole dish. Mix together the red wine vinegar, honey and orange juice and pour this over the vegetables. Add a good pinch of salt and a generous grinding of black pepper and stir to mix everything together. Break the cinnamon stick in half and tuck it and the star anise among the vegetables. Dot the butter over the top.
2. Cover the dish and put it into the oven at 180C/350F/gas mark 4 for 1½ hours, by which time the vegetables should be very tender. Halfway through the cooking time, give everything a stir around.
3. Remove the cinnamon stick and the star anise before serving.



## Red cabbage slaw with chilli and lime juice

Tossing raw cabbage with salt and lemon or lime juice and leaving it to sit for an hour makes it softer – and it also has an amazing effect on the colour; the citric acid fixes the colour, but first it makes it run, so that the white leaf ribs are dyed a glorious cerise.

### Ingredients (serves 2)

150g (5½oz) red cabbage, cored and very finely shredded

2½ tbsp lime juice

A good pinch of salt

70g (2½oz) carrot, cut into 2.5cm (1in) sections and then into fine batons

Half a red onion, peeled, quartered and finely sliced

Half a mild red chilli, finely chopped

1 garlic clove, peeled and crushed

2 tbsp mild olive oil

2 tsp muscovado sugar

1 tbsp sesame seeds

1. Put the shredded cabbage into a bowl with 1½ tbsp of the lime juice and the salt, give it a good stir, and let it sit for an hour or so.
2. If any water has been drawn out of the cabbage, drain it off. Then add the carrot, onion, chilli and garlic to the bowl.
3. Mix together the olive oil, the muscovado sugar and the remaining tablespoon of lime juice. Add this to the salad, and mix everything together.
4. Put the sesame seeds into a dry frying pan and toast them over a moderate heat for a couple of minutes, until they turn golden. Sprinkle them over the top of the salad.



# SUBSCRIBE



*Kitchen Garden* is Britain's best magazine for those who like to grow their own. Every month it is packed with down-

to-earth advice from the UK's best hands-on gardeners. So if you are one of the ever growing band who want to grow their own fresh produce all-year-round, why not take out a subscription? There are some great benefits - you'll save a massive 16 per cent on the cover price and get regular free seeds to keep you growing throughout 2011. Plus, you'll never have to worry about missing a single issue of your favourite gardening magazine.

*Steve*



## 3 easy ways to subscribe

@ [www.kitchengarden.co.uk](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk)

☎ 01507 529529 Lines open weekdays 8.30am – 5pm

✉ Simply fill in the form provided and return to our freepost address



# SAVE

- Only £36 (UK) to subscribe – that's a saving of over £7 on the cover price
- Delivered to your door days before it goes on sale
- Never miss an issue!
- Avoid any future price rises



## Other benefits:

When you subscribe to Kitchen Garden you'll also benefit from these great online services:

- View and amend your subscription details in a personal log in-area just for you
- Check the status of your subscription, so you'll know when it's time to renew
- Renew your subscription securely online with our simple step-by-step order system

## Plus –

Benefit from great online offers

## KitchenGARDEN SUBSCRIPTION FORM

February 2011

To subscribe to *Kitchen Garden* simply complete the form below and return to:  
**Kitchen Garden Subscriptions, Mortons Media Group Ltd,**  
Freepost DC113, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6BR

☐ £36 (UK) ☐ £46 (EU) ☐ £56 (Rest of World)

I wish to subscribe by: ☐ Direct Debit ☐ Credit Card ☐ Cheque

### Payer's details (must be completed)

Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms (please delete)

Initials Surname

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Mobile

Email

### Delivery details (if different to above)

Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms (please delete)

Initials Surname

Address

Postcode

On occasion Mortons Media Group Ltd may decide to contact you by post/ phone regarding information relating to current offers of products or services (including discounted subscription offers) which we believe may be of interest to our readers. If you do not wish to receive such offers please tick this box ☐  
On occasion Mortons Media Group Ltd may decide to email/fax you regarding information relating to current offers of products or services (including discounted subscription offers) which we believe may be of interest to our readers. If you wish to receive such offers, please tick this box ☐  
On occasion Mortons Media Group Ltd may permit 3rd parties, that we deem to be reputable, to contact you by post/ phone/ fax/email regarding information relating to current offers of products or services which we believe may be of interest to our readers. If you wish to receive such offers please tick this box ☐

### Payment method

#### 1. ☐ DIRECT DEBIT

**Instruction to Bank/Building Society to pay by Direct Debit:**



I would like to change/take out a subscription for £9.00 per quarter (UK/ROI only)

Account in the name of

Account number Sort code

Name of Bank/Building Society

Address

Postcode

Please pay Mortons Media Group Ltd direct debits from the account detailed in the instructions, subject to the safeguards of the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Mortons Media Group and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society. **Originator's ID number: 830390**

Signature Date

#### 2. ☐ CREDIT CARD

Please debit my: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Switch/Maestro

Card number:

Start date / / Expiry date / /

3 digit verification code Switch issue number

Signature Date

#### 3. ☐ CHEQUE I enclose a cheque made payable to Mortons Media Group

Reference number (office use only)



# DIARY DATES

Potato days offer the chance to buy varieties you won't find anywhere else...visit an event near you and discover something new

## FEBRUARY

**Vegetable patch** 1 or 21 February. River Cottage HQ, Park Farm, nr Axminster, Devon. How to make the most of your plot, large or small, day course, 10am-5pm. 01297 630302, [www.rivercottage.net](http://www.rivercottage.net)

**Fruit pruning workshop** 2 February. Waterperry Gardens, Waterperry, Near Wheatley, Oxfordshire. Practical course for those with basic knowledge, 10.30am-3.30pm. Book on 01844 339254 [www.waterperrygardens.co.uk](http://www.waterperrygardens.co.uk).

**Managing fruit trees** 3 February. Thornhayes Nursery, Dulford, Cullompton, Devon. The different sizes, types and growing systems for home fruit production. 2-4pm. 01884 266746, [www.thornhayes-nursery.co.uk](http://www.thornhayes-nursery.co.uk)

**Durham potato day** 5 February. Bowburn Community Centre, County Durham. Around 28 varieties, advice, refreshments. Organised by Durham Organic Gardeners, 10am-2pm. 01913 721394 [www.doga.org.uk](http://www.doga.org.uk)

**Shropshire potato day** 5 February. Village Hall, Nescliffe. Seed potatoes, vegetable seeds, onion sets, advice, refreshments, 10am-4pm. 01939 260935 [www.shropshireorganicgardeners.org.uk](http://www.shropshireorganicgardeners.org.uk)

**Preparing your vegetable garden or allotment** 5 February. Brogdale Farm, Faversham, Kent. Book on 01795 536250 [www.brogdalecollections.co.uk](http://www.brogdalecollections.co.uk)

**Skelmersdale potato day** 6 February. Woodley Park Centre, Ashmead Road, Ashurst, Skelmersdale. Seed potatoes, vegetable seeds, soft fruit, onion sets etc. 01695 720636 [rebekahsveg@talktalk.net](mailto:rebekahsveg@talktalk.net)

**Urchfont potato day** 6 February. Urchfont Village Hall, Urchfont, nr Devizes, Wiltshire. 80 plus potato varieties, heritage seeds, onion sets and more. 10.30am-2pm. 01749 860039 [www.potato-days.net](http://www.potato-days.net)

**Seedy Sunday** 6 February. Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove. Annual community seed swap, seed potatoes, stalls, talks, advice, café. 10am-4.30pm. 01273 381686 [www.seedysunday.org](http://www.seedysunday.org)

**Spring workshop in the vineyard** 6 or 13 February. Ickworth House, Horringer, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. Learn how to prune vines and the art of winemaking, 10am-1pm. Book on 01284 769505.

**Grow your own food** 8 February. RHS Centre, Pershore College, Avonbank, Pershore, Worcestershire. Planning, preparation and soil, 2-4pm. More details and booking on 01386 554609.

**East Anglia potato day** 12 February. Mid-Suffolk Showground, Stonham Barns, Stonham Aspal, Stowmarket, Suffolk. 100 plus potato varieties, seedswap, books, tools, chip tasting, 9.30am-1.30pm. 01206 570859 [www.eapd.btck.com](http://www.eapd.btck.com)

**Drimpton potato day** 12 February. Drimpton Village Hall, Drimpton, nr Beaminstor. Dorset. 80 plus varieties potato, seeds, plant and produce stall, advice, refreshments. 10.30am-3.30pm. Tel: 01749 860039, [www.potato-days.net](http://www.potato-days.net)

**Italian tomatoes** 12 February. Seeds of Italy, Rosslyn Crescent, Harrow, Middlesex. From seed to plate. 10.15am-12pm. Book on 02084 275020 [www.seedsofitaly.com](http://www.seedsofitaly.com).

**Lancashire potato day** 13 February. Pendle Community High School, Pendle Vale Campus, Oxford Road, Nelson. Seed potatoes, vegetable seeds, soft fruit, onion sets etc, refreshments, charity seed swap; from 9am. 01282 690518, [rebekahsveg@talktalk.net](mailto:rebekahsveg@talktalk.net)

**Somerset potato day** 13 February. Pylle Church Hall, Pylle, Shepton Mallet. 80 plus potato varieties, seeds, onion sets and more. 10am-2pm. 01749 860039, [www.potato-days.net](http://www.potato-days.net)

**Making the most of your greenhouse** 15 February. RHS Centre, Pershore College, Avonbank, Pershore, Worcestershire. 2-4pm. More details and booking on 01386 554609.

**Winter fruit tree pruning** 19 February. RHS Centre, Pershore College, Avonbank, Pershore, Worcestershire. 10am-4pm. More details and booking on 01386 554609.

**Mold potato day** 19 February. Church Hall, King Street, Mold. Seed potatoes, veg seeds, onion sets, soft fruit, refreshments; from 10am. 01978 761083, [rebekahsveg@talktalk.net](mailto:rebekahsveg@talktalk.net)

**Codford potato day** 19 February. Codford Village Hall, Codford, Warminster, Wiltshire. 80 plus potato varieties, seeds, onion sets and more. 10.30am-2pm. 01749 860039, [www.potato-days.net](http://www.potato-days.net)

**Fruit tree grafting** 19 February. Witheridge, Devon. Basic techniques plus rootstocks for sale, 10am-4pm. 01884 861181 [www.orchardslive.org.uk](http://www.orchardslive.org.uk)

**West Yorkshire potato day** 19 February. Shipley College, Exhibition Hall, Exhibition Road, Saltaire. Seed potatoes, stalls, potato-themed food; organised by West Yorkshire Organic Group 10am-2pm. 01274 580119 [www.wyog.org](http://www.wyog.org)

**First Essex potato day** 19 February. Growing Together Gardens, 47 Fairfax Drive, Southend-on-Sea. 10am-2pm. 01702 201914 [www.seeog.org.uk](http://www.seeog.org.uk)

**Winter fruit tree pruning** 19 February. RHS Centre, Pershore College, Avonbank, Pershore, Worcestershire. 10am-4pm. Book on 01386 554609.

**Potato day and seed swap** 20 February. Cheese and Grain, Market Yard, Justice Lane, Frome. Community seed swap, seed potatoes, food. 10am-2pm. 01373 462842 [www.transitionfrome.org.uk](http://www.transitionfrome.org.uk)

**Allotment gardening** 22 February. River Cottage HQ, Park Farm, nr Axminster, Devon. Day course, 10am-5pm. 01297 630302, [www.rivercottage.net](http://www.rivercottage.net)

**Keeping hens** 23 February. Killerton House, Broadclyst, Exeter, Devon. Talk, 2-3.30pm. Book on 01392 881345.

**Grow your own food** 24 February. The Walled Gardens, East Pennard, Somerset. Growing year round veg, talks and demonstrations. 10.30am-3pm. Book on 01749 860039, [www.pennardplants.com](http://www.pennardplants.com)

**Marshfield potato day** 26 February. Marshfield Village Hall, Tormartin Drive, 80 plus potato varieties, heritage seeds, onion sets and more. 10am-2pm. 01749 860039 [www.potato-days.net](http://www.potato-days.net)

**Saturday fruit pruning** 26 February. Waterperry Gardens, Waterperry, Near Wheatley, Oxfordshire. Top tips from the orchard manager. Book on 01844 339254 [www.waterperrygardens.co.uk](http://www.waterperrygardens.co.uk)

**Cumbria potato day** 27 February. Caldbeck Parish Hall, Caldbeck, Wigton. Seed potatoes, veg seeds, onion sets, soft fruit, refreshments, from 10am. 01697 478190 [rebekahsveg@talktalk.net](mailto:rebekahsveg@talktalk.net)

**Arundel A21 seed swap** 27 February. Norfolk Hall, Mill Road, Arundel, West Sussex. Swap seeds, plants and gardening books. Expert advice and refreshments, 1-4pm. 01903 885826.

## MARCH

**Composting and recycling** 2 March. RHS Garden Harlow Carr, Harrogate, Yorkshire. Workshop, 10am-4pm. Book on 08456 121253.

**Vegetable varieties of alpine Italy** 4 March. Seeds of Italy, Rosslyn Crescent, Harrow, Middlesex. From seed to plate. 6.30-8.15pm. Book on 02084 275020 [www.seedsofitaly.com](http://www.seedsofitaly.com)

**Management of traditional orchards** 5 March. RHS Centre, Pershore College, Avonbank, Pershore, Worcestershire. 10am-4pm. More details and booking on 01386 554609.

**Holford potato day** 5 March. Holford & District Village Hall, nr Bridgwater, Somerset. 80 plus varieties potato, onion sets, seeds and more, 10.30am-2pm. 01749 860039 [www.potato-days.net](http://www.potato-days.net)

**Herefordshire Seed Swap** 5 March. Methodist Hall, St Owen Street, Hereford. Stalls, talks, tool sharpening, light refreshments, 10am-2pm. 01531 670797 [www.swapseeds.org.uk](http://www.swapseeds.org.uk)

**Disease and pest control in fruit** 5 March. Brogdale Farm, Faversham, Kent. Book on 01795 536250 [www.brogdalecollections.co.uk](http://www.brogdalecollections.co.uk)



**Saturday fruit pruning** 6 March. Waterperry Gardens, Waterperry, Near Wheatley, Oxfordshire. Top tips from the orchard manager. Book on 01844 339254

**Wells Potato Day** 6 March. Seagar Hall, Union Street, Wells, Somerset. 80+ varieties potato, onion sets, seeds and more, 10.00am -2.00pm. 01749 860039, [www.potato-days.net](http://www.potato-days.net)

**Introduction to growing organic vegetables** 9 March. Barnsdale Gardens, The Avenue, Exton, Oakham, Rutland. One day course, 10.30am-3.30pm. Book on 01572 813200.

**Grow your own food** 10 March. The Walled Gardens, East Pennard, Somerset. Growing year round veg, talks and demonstrations, 10.30am-3pm. Book on 01749 860039, [www.pennardplants.com](http://www.pennardplants.com)

**The organic kitchen garden** 11-13 March. West Dean Gardens, West Dean, Chichester, West Sussex. Year round guide to growing your own fruit and veg, 2 day course. Book on 01243 811301 [www.westdean.org.uk](http://www.westdean.org.uk)

**Vegetables all year round** 12 March. Barnsdale Gardens, The Avenue, Exton, Oakham, Rutland. One day course, 10am-3.30pm. Book on 01572 813200.

**Grow your own food** 12 March. RHS Centre, Pershore College, Avonbank, Pershore, Worcestershire. Sowing, growing and harvesting, 2-4pm. More details and booking on 01386 554609.

**Advanced fruit tree pruning** 12 March. RHS Centre, Pershore College, Avonbank, Pershore, Worcestershire. 10am-4pm. More details and booking on 01386 554609.

**Pewsey potato day** 12 March. Bouverie Hall, North Street, Pewsey, Wiltshire. 80 plus varieties potato, onion sets, seeds and more, 10am-2pm. 01749 860039, [www.potato-days.net](http://www.potato-days.net)

**Rushall & district potato day** 13 March. Rushall Village Hall, Rushall, Wiltshire. 80+ varieties potato, onion sets, seeds and more, 10am-2pm. 01749 860039, [www.potato-days.net](http://www.potato-days.net)

**Preserving garden & orchard fruits** 26 March. Brogdale Farm, Faversham, Kent. Book on 01795 536250 [www.brogdalecollections.co.uk](http://www.brogdalecollections.co.uk)

**Vegetable varieties and cuisine of Northern Italy** 25 March. Seeds of Italy, Rosslyn Crescent, Harrow, Middlesex. From seed to plate. 6.30-8.15pm. Book on 02084 275020 [www.seedsofitaly.com](http://www.seedsofitaly.com).

**Grow your own weekend** 26-27 March. Garden Organic Ryton, Wolston Lane, Coventry. Tips, advice, demos on growing all things edible and organic. 02476 303517 [www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)



Learn advanced pruning at Pershore College

## Kitchen Garden February giveaways

TO ENTER: Simply fill in the details below and return to us at: Kitchen Garden February Giveaways, FREEPOST DC113, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6BR. You can also enter online for free at: [www.kitchengarden.co.uk](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk)

Name	
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone	
Email Address	
Closing Date	Friday 11 February 2011

To enter: Once you have supplied your details, cut out and send this coupon to the address above and you will automatically be entered into the following competitions:

Secret weapons for growing-bag gardeners (page 82)	✓
Grow your own show (page 82)	✓
Get set, grow! (page 82)	✓

### Disclaimers:

Only tick this box if you do not wish to receive information from Mortons Media Group regarding or relating to current offers of products or services (including discounted subscription offers) via email/post/phone ☐

On occasion Mortons Media Group Ltd may permit third parties, that we deem to be reputable, to contact you by email/post/phone/fax regarding information relating to current offers of products or services which we believe may be of interest to our readers. If you wish to receive such offers please tick this box. ☐

● For full giveaway terms and conditions please visit: [www.kitchengarden.co.uk](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk)

## Contact the seed company

AK	Association Kokopelli tel 01227 731815 <a href="http://www.kokopelli-seeds.com">www.kokopelli-seeds.com</a>
AR	Alan Romans tel 01337 831060 <a href="http://www.alanromans.com">www.alanromans.com</a>
C	Chiltern Seeds tel 01229 581137 <a href="http://www.chilternseeds.co.uk">www.chilternseeds.co.uk</a>
DTB	DT Brown & Co tel 0845 166 2275 <a href="http://www.dtbrownseeds.co.uk">www.dtbrownseeds.co.uk</a>
D	Samuel Dobie and Son tel 01803 696444 <a href="http://www.dobies.co.uk">www.dobies.co.uk</a>
Th E	Thomas Etty tel 01460 57934 <a href="http://www.thomasetty.co.uk">www.thomasetty.co.uk</a>
F	Mr. Fothergill's Seeds tel 0845 166 2511 <a href="http://www.mr-fothergills.co.uk">www.mr-fothergills.co.uk</a>
H	The Herbarry tel 01985 844442 <a href="http://www.beansandherbs.co.uk">www.beansandherbs.co.uk</a>
HSL	Heritage Seed Library tel 02476 303517
JH	JH Jekka's Herb Farm tel 01454 418878 <a href="http://www.jekkasheerbfarm.com">www.jekkasheerbfarm.com</a>
K	EW King & Co tel 01376 570000 <a href="http://www.kingsseeds.com">www.kingsseeds.com</a>
M	SE Marshall & Co tel 01480 443390 <a href="http://www.marshalls-seeds.co.uk">www.marshalls-seeds.co.uk</a>
MS	Medwyn's Seeds tel 01248 714851 <a href="http://www.medwynsofanglesey.co.uk">www.medwynsofanglesey.co.uk</a>
MV	Moreveg tel: 01823 681302 <a href="http://www.moreveg.co.uk">www.moreveg.co.uk</a>
N	Nicky's Nursery tel 01843 600972 <a href="http://www.nickys-nursery.co.uk">www.nickys-nursery.co.uk</a>
O	The Organic Gardening Catalogue tel 0845 130 1304 <a href="http://www.OrganicCatalog.com">www.OrganicCatalog.com</a>
RSC	The Real Seed Catalogue (Vida Verde) tel 01239 821107 <a href="http://www.realseeds.co.uk">www.realseeds.co.uk</a>
R	W Robinson & Sons Ltd tel 01524 791210 <a href="http://www.mammothonion.co.uk">www.mammothonion.co.uk</a>
SBS	Seeds-By-Size tel 01442 251458 <a href="http://www.seeds-by-size.co.uk">www.seeds-by-size.co.uk</a>
I	Seeds of Italy tel 0208 427 5020 <a href="http://www.seedsofitaly.com">www.seedsofitaly.com</a>
SS	Select Seeds tel 01246 826011 <a href="http://www.selectseeds.co.uk">www.selectseeds.co.uk</a>
Sh	Shelley Seeds tel 01244 317165 <a href="mailto:shelleyseeds@chester137.fsnet.co.uk">shelleyseeds@chester137.fsnet.co.uk</a>
SV	Simply Vegetables tel 01449 721720 <a href="http://www.plantsofdistinction.co.uk">www.plantsofdistinction.co.uk</a>
SI S	Simpson's Seeds tel 01985 845004 <a href="http://www.simpsonseeds.co.uk">www.simpsonseeds.co.uk</a>
SH	Suffolk Herbs tel 01376 572456 <a href="http://www.suffolkherbs.com">www.suffolkherbs.com</a>
S	Suttons tel 0870 220 2899 <a href="http://www.suttons-seeds.co.uk">www.suttons-seeds.co.uk</a>
T O	Tamar Organics tel 01822 834887 <a href="mailto:tamarorganics@aol.com">tamarorganics@aol.com</a>
TS	Terwins Seeds tel 01284 828255 <a href="http://www.terwinseeds.co.uk">www.terwinseeds.co.uk</a>
T&M	Thompson & Morgan tel 01473 688821 <a href="http://www.thompson-morgan.com">www.thompson-morgan.com</a>
ET	Edwin Tucker & Sons Ltd tel 01364 652233 <a href="http://www.edwintucker.com">www.edwintucker.com</a>
U	Unwins Seeds tel 01480 443395 <a href="http://www.unwinsdirect.co.uk">www.unwinsdirect.co.uk</a>
W	Wallis Seeds tel 01245 360413
V	Victoriana Nursery Gardens tel 01233 740529 <a href="http://www.victoriananursery.co.uk">www.victoriananursery.co.uk</a>



# LAST WORD

KG reader **Julie Freeman** from Oxford loves wildlife but she is also passionate about growing fruit and vegetables and is finding that sometimes the two don't mix

## Oh deer!

I really like wildlife, but I also like growing fruit and vegetables and quite often the two don't mix. On my allotment we have a muntjac deer – there could be more than one, but we haven't done a head count. And every now and again a discussion breaks out about the benefits (I use the word loosely) of deer on the plot. One of my allotment neighbours said she thought it was a 'privilege' living in close proximity to wildlife – that was not the word another neighbour used! But he was a bit cross at the time, as the deer had cleared his plot and I don't think he was left with much to feed his family.

I believe it is possible to live in harmony. This year my initial sowings of runner beans and sunflower plants were eaten by, I presume the deer. I made another sowing and provided some net protection at the base and they grew to have a happy and productive life.

The battle was lost with the courgettes, but as all vegetable gardeners know they can get very boring after a while. I started off with two plants which were very healthy and productive. I think I managed to pull four courgettes and the deer had the rest. Did I mind? No, because I genuinely don't know what to do with them after a while. And the year I want a bumper harvest I will put up some protection – or relocate the plants. After initially protecting the young plants, the winter squash thrived and will keep me fed for a few more months.

What really intrigued me were the plants that were left unharmed. My very favourite thing to growing tomatoes. As far as I can see from my, not very clinical trial, is that deer do not like this fruit. This year I had a bumper crop. I have given up the battle with blight and just hope that the elements are on my side. This year we had quite a cold August and I think that helped. Another thing I seem to grow successfully is soft fruit. I have a minimal amount of netting around the raspberries and I leave the currants exposed. I have a large bramble area nearby and I think this distracts the wildlife.

So what is my advice on living with deer? Don't develop a fortress mentality just try and understand nature – or read a book. I found a book entitled *The Deer in Your Garden*, when at the time I thought it should have been called *The Garden in Your Deer*. This helped me understand where all my young rose buds were going, as, up until then, I had been blaming two legged rats. According to the books roses are one of the deer's favourite flowering plants to eat – I moved the roses.

You cannot protect your crop from everything; pigeons, deer, pests and diseases. So, live in harmony where you can.



Muntjac deer were first introduced from China to Woburn Park in Bedfordshire in the early 20th century. Their escape from the park has resulted in feral populations which are rapidly spreading across England and Wales

### HAVE YOUR SAY AND WIN £20 WORTH OF VOUCHERS



We are giving you the chance to have the last word in Kitchen Garden. If your piece is published you will win a £20 voucher to spend with Two Wests and Elliott. Simply pick a topic which could be a serious controversial gardening issue or maybe a humorous look at fruit and veg growing and send it to [erawlings@mortons.co.uk](mailto:erawlings@mortons.co.uk)

Please include your name, address and telephone number so that if your piece is chosen to be published we can arrange for the vouchers to be sent to you. Please aim to write between 300-500 words. If you have a picture of yourself or other pictures to illustrate your piece please send these in too.

Two Wests and Elliott are the leading manufacturer and supplier of greenhouses, greenhouse staging, fruit cages and many other items of gardening equipment. Their extensive catalogue is packed with gardening goodies or you can shop online at [www.twowests.co.uk](http://www.twowests.co.uk) or phone 01246 451077.





# WebWatch

www.kitchengarden.co.uk

## Chiltern Seeds

Our 2011 Seed Catalogue and 'VegBook' offers around 4,000 items, including an excellent selection of tasty Heirloom vegetables, salad crops and kitchen herbs.

Tel: 01229 581137 • Email: KG@chilternseeds.co.uk • www.chilternseeds.co.uk



A fresh start to the gardening year with our boutique gifts

Garden tips on the go with our FREE iPhone App!

**ECOTISTIX** www.ecolistix.co.uk 01892 807777



01376 572456

As individual as you are.....  
The suffolk herb catalogue  
www.suffolkherbs.com  
sales@suffolkherbs.com



Garden and Commercial  
Polytunnels, Cloches and Fruit Cages

enjoy the outside, inside

www.premierpolytunnels.co.uk t: 01282 811250



**PlantsByPost.com**

The Gardeners Shop UK  
Everything you need to grow your own

Tel: 020 8777 4332  
www.thegardenersshop.co.uk

Grow tasty fruit and veg without soil  
**www.thehydroponicum.com**  
Tel: 01854 622202 for mail order catalogue  
**THE ACHILTUBUE GARDEN**  
...let's grow

**Hudnalls Apiaries**  
www.hudnallsapiaries.co.uk  
'Probably the best beeswax hand cream in the UK'  
Tel: 01594-530807



Tel: 07515 663700  
WEALD PLACE FARM BEES  
www.wealdplacefarmbees.co.uk

Come see what the buzz is all about.

**Hedges Herbs Climbers** **Buckingham Nurseries** **Soft Fruit Shrubs Fruit Trees**  
www.hedging.co.uk  
01280 822133

**THE NEW WEBSITE FOR ALL YOUR GARDENING NEEDS.**  
www.mrdigwell.com

**MR DIGWELL**  
traditional & trusted...

**Clamclean** **LINE-LOK® - the world's best guy line runner**  
Quick and easy to tension and release. Will not shake loose, even in extreme conditions. Out-performs traditional alloy and plastic guy runners.  
Buy at **www.cleats.co.uk**



**theallotmentsshop.co.uk**  
PURVEYORS OF ALL RETRO GARDEN GOODIES, NICETIES AND PARAPHERNALIA

**www.elixirgardensupplies.co.uk**  
for DISCOUNT PRICES on pots, trays, canes, weed membranes, nettings, massive range of fertilizers, plant food, labels, jiffy products, coir, greenhouse products.  
We cater for the serious gardener - too much to mention - log on now! You will find it's worth it.

**Nicky's NURSERY**  
Tel/Fax: 01843 600972 • www.nickys-nursery.co.uk  
All your seed requirements in one place

**Organic Plants for Gardens & Allotments**  
Delfland Nurseries Limited  
Tel: 01354 740553  
Organic Vegetable, Salad, Ornamental & Herb Plants  
On-line Catalogue, Mail Order, Nursery Shop & Wholesale  
www.organicplants.co.uk

**More Veg** **VEGETABLE SEEDS**  
Affordable Prices, Realistic Quantities  
NEW CATALOGUE OUT NOW, over 800 varieties!  
01823 681302 www.moreveg.co.uk

**VegGrower.co.uk**  
The home of grow-your-own

Leading supplier of seeds for the home gardener  
**www.kingsseeds.com**

Go online for the best lawn seed  
**www.westernlawns.co.uk** **Western Lawns**

for a free range future  
Can you give some hens a happy home?  
www.bhwt.org.uk  
Tel: 01769 580310  
Email: info@bhwt.org.uk

To advertise telephone Bernadette on 01507 529537



# Classifieds

To advertise tel: 01507 529416 or email: [bhumphrey@mortons.co.uk](mailto:bhumphrey@mortons.co.uk)

## BULBS

**NEW SUMMER BULBS**

**deJager**

Top Quality, Top Size Bulbs  
Flower Bulb Specialists Since 1968

Order direct  
online at  
[www.dejager.co.uk](http://www.dejager.co.uk)

Retail and  
Wholesale

Tel: 01622 840229  
FOR A FREE CATALOGUE

Don't miss out  
on D.T. Brown's  
great NEW  
season catalogue

**D.T. BROWN**  
The mail order Fruit & Vegetable Company

Ring now to request your copy  
and quote: DC11KG1

**0845 371 0532**

Lines open 8am-8pm 7 days a week  
or request your copy through our website

[www.dtbrownseeds.co.uk](http://www.dtbrownseeds.co.uk)

## CHASE GARDEN ORGANIC SEEDS

### GROWING SATISFACTION

The complete range of  
award winning vegetable,  
flower and herb seeds.

Voted Which? Best Buy  
Organic Seed Supplier 2010.



The Organic Gardening Catalogue  
01932 253666

[www.OrganicCatalogue.com](http://www.OrganicCatalogue.com)

## FRUIT

**NATIONAL FRUIT  
TREE SPECIALIST**

Established 1966

Over 300 varieties of APPLES  
even on M26 (8ft) and many on  
M27 (4ft) for pots and patios.  
Family Trees of Cherry, Plum,  
Apple, Pear, Peach and much  
more, upright cordons too!

Also soft fruit, grapes and hops  
NOW OVER 40 YEARS IN BUSINESS.  
LOTS OF SPECIAL OFFERS  
Send for free catalogue  
Please quote ref: KG

10% OFF  
all orders of  
£40 and over plus  
a FREE apple tree  
of our choice  
From 11th Jan -  
25th March 2011

**DEACONS  
NURSERY,**  
GODSHILL,  
ISLE OF WIGHT  
PO38 3HW

Tel 01983 840750/  
522243 (24hrs)  
Fax 01983 523575

email: [info@deaconsnurseryfruits.co.uk](mailto:info@deaconsnurseryfruits.co.uk)  
[www.deaconsnurseryfruits.co.uk](http://www.deaconsnurseryfruits.co.uk)

**THORNHAYES  
NURSERY**

QUALITY TREES  
FROM DEVON

Growers of one of the largest  
ranges of fruit and ornamental trees  
in the country. Over 1000 species and  
varieties to choose from.  
Mail order available.

Fully descriptive catalogue online  
[www.thornhayes-nursery.co.uk](http://www.thornhayes-nursery.co.uk)  
or contact Thornhayes Nursery  
Dulford, Cullompton, Devon EX15 2DF  
Tel: 01884 266746

**Walcot**  
ORGANIC NURSERY

Growers of a wide selection  
of fruit trees for all situations

**Fruit  
Trees**

Detailed catalogue available  
**01905 841587**  
[www.walcotnursery.co.uk](http://www.walcotnursery.co.uk)

The booking deadline  
for the March issue is  
14 January

## FRUIT CAGES

**FRUIT & VEGETABLE CAGES**

**Harrod**  
HORTICULTURAL

10% OFF  
QUOTE ELSA76

free 116 page catalogue  
call 0845 402 5300  
[harrodhorticultural.com](http://harrodhorticultural.com)

## CATALOGUES

## NEW GARDEN SEED CATALOGUE

Call to order  
2010/11 catalogue NOW

Organic, oriental, ordinary vegetables, herbs  
and flowers. Natural predators.

**Wallis Seeds, KG**  
Broadgreen, Gt. Waltham, Chelmsford,  
Essex CM3 1DS. Tel 01245 360413  
[info@wallis-seeds.co.uk](mailto:info@wallis-seeds.co.uk) [www.wallis-seeds.co.uk](http://www.wallis-seeds.co.uk)

**DOBIES**  
of Devon

**FREE Catalogue**  
2011 Edition

Seeds from  
80p

Seeds, plants,  
bulbs, fruit,  
vegetables,  
flowers and more.

Direct to you at  
great prices.

**BEST BUY**  
which  
? [www.which.co.uk](http://www.which.co.uk)  
Seed brand October 2010

Order your catalogue on:  
**0844 701 7625**  
[www.dobies.co.uk](http://www.dobies.co.uk) Please quote MXA11

Don't miss your copy - order today by handing  
this coupon to your newsagent

## Kitchen GARDEN

Dear Newsagent,  
Please reserve/deliver my next copy of Kitchen  
Garden magazine, starting with the next issue.

Name .....

Address .....

Postcode .....

To advertise in the next edition call  
Bernadette on 01507 529537



# Fruit Cage Kit £199

All you need for a bumper crop



GALVANISED STEEL FRAME



NETTING



TIES & CLIPS



HOOKS



DOOR

W2.5m x L5m x H1.83m

**Agriframes™**  
the secret of elegant gardens  
KG0211

FREE CATALOGUE  
Tel: 0845 260 44 50 (local rate)  
[www.agriframes.co.uk](http://www.agriframes.co.uk)

## FRUIT, VEGETABLE & STRAWBERRY CAGES

Examples at 2m high including a door  
3m x 3m...£168 5m x 3m...£230  
6m x 3m...£243 8m x 5m...£429

We also specialize in:

- Garden, Pond and Insect netting
- Garden Polytunnels and Cloches
- Poultry Nets

**KNOWLE NETS** 01308 424342

East Road, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 4NX  
E: [info@knowlenets.co.uk](mailto:info@knowlenets.co.uk) [www.knowlenets.co.uk](http://www.knowlenets.co.uk)

## GREENHOUSES

*Greenhouse*  
**BONANZA**



Please call for quote

Here at Greenhouse Bonanza quality and service is the foremost of our priorities. We don't sell supermarket cheapies, but we do sell high quality, top brand name greenhouses at the keenest prices, such that their value speaks for itself. We are committed to providing the best possible service for our customers.

**New Acorn 6x6 Package**  
Please call for a quote

Offer features: Greenhouse, base plinth, roof vent and ventomatic, 6ft integral staging, downpipes

Call for your free brochure 0800 389 8760  
Telephone 01295 201 350  
Email [mail@greenhousebonanza.com](mailto:mail@greenhousebonanza.com)  
Visit us at [www.greenhousebonanza.com](http://www.greenhousebonanza.com)

EVERYTHING YOU NEED & MORE!

## POLYTUNNELS

**Ferryman POLYTUNNELS**

offer quality and value!

For gardens, allotments, smallholdings, farms and nurseries. Widths of 8', 10', 12', 14', 16', 18', 21' and 24' with curved and straight sides. A full range of Tufftunnels for windy sites. Other applications include animal housing, swimming pool covers and boat housing.

Free brochure from Ferryman Poly tunnels Ltd., Bridge Road, Lapford, Crediton, Devon EX17 6AE.  
Tel: 01363 83444 Fax: 01363 83050  
Email: [info@ferryman.uk.com](mailto:info@ferryman.uk.com)  
Website: [www.ferryman.uk.com](http://www.ferryman.uk.com)

## Solar Tunnels



The modern alternative to glass & polythene  
[www.solartunnels.co.uk](http://www.solartunnels.co.uk)  
Tel/Fax: 01903 742615

Flexible all year sowing & growing environment  
• Spacious • Robust • Versatile • Attractive  
• Expandable • Relocatable • Reinforced  
• Pool enclosures • Gazebos  
• Serrallux Polycarbonate Greenhouses

[www.kitchengarden.co.uk](http://www.kitchengarden.co.uk)

*Traditional Dutch light timber glasshouses standard and bespoke made to order*



**Peritys (Glasshouse Makers)**  
Bona Lane, Wisbech, Cambs PE13 5JQ  
Tel & Fax: 01945 410471  
[www.peritys.co.uk](http://www.peritys.co.uk)

## GREENHOUSE STAGING

**Harrod HORTICULTURAL**



10% OFF  
QUOTE ELSA77

free 116 page catalogue  
call 0845 402 5300  
[harrodhorticultural.com](http://harrodhorticultural.com)

## GREENHOUSE ACCESSORIES

**Two Wests & Elliott**  
Greenhouse & Gardening Equipment

**FREE CATALOGUE**

Over 2000 quality products

Staging • Plant Pots • Propagators  
Thermostats • Shelving • Cloches  
Raised Beds • Composters • Pest Control • Fruit Cages • Heaters  
Watering Systems • Cold Frames  
Greenhouses • Poly tunnels

**01246 451077**  
[www.twowests.co.uk](http://www.twowests.co.uk)  
Two Wests (UK), Carrwood Rd, Sheepen Road, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S41 9RH

## RAISED BEDS

### TIMBER RAISED BEDS

**Harrod HORTICULTURAL**



10% OFF  
QUOTE ELSA77

free 116 page catalogue  
call 0845 402 5300  
[harrodhorticultural.com](http://harrodhorticultural.com)

**PREMIER POLYTUNNELS**

*Polytunnels, Cloches and Fruit Cages - Garden and Commercial*



enjoy the outside, inside t: 01282 811250  
[www.premierpolytunnels.co.uk](http://www.premierpolytunnels.co.uk)





EVERY DAY MORE GARDENERS ARE TURNING TO THE NATURAL WAY OF GROWING.... **Organically**

**6x is 100% Natural Fertiliser. The Best Thing On Earth!**

If you have difficulties in locating 6x within your local garden centre, please visit the products page on our website for mail order details.

**roger@groworganic.org**

**www.6-x.co.uk • 01458 272202**



## SEEDS



### HEIRLOOM TOMATOES Ltd

*Tomato flavour as it used to be*

Visit [www.heirloomtomatoes.org](http://www.heirloomtomatoes.org)

or send £1 for our full colour catalogue with 83 varieties of tomatoes to:

Baldersby Gardens, Ripon Road, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 4PS

Seeds cost £3 a packet or 2 for £5. Free P&P (UK only)

### Shelley Seeds

(Established 1987)

OVER 500 PRODUCTS INCLUDING  
TOP QUALITY VEGETABLE SEEDS,  
HERBS AND POTATOES

2011 catalogue post free on request from  
Shelley Seeds (Dept KG),  
5 Speedwell Close, Chester CH3 6DX or  
Tel 01244 317165

### TUCKERS

For a FREE

### SEEDS

GARDEN

CATALOGUE

Please visit our website

[www.edwintucker.com](http://www.edwintucker.com)

or TEL: 01364 652233 FAX: 01364 654211

EMAIL: [seeds@edwintucker.com](mailto:seeds@edwintucker.com)

Also Available by Mail Order

VEGETABLE & FLOWER SEEDS

Tuckers Trustworthy Seeds - The Value for Money range



### W. Robinson & Son Ltd

ROBINSON'S VEGETABLE SEEDS AND PLANTS  
TOP QUALITY NATURALLY GROWN SEEDS

Tomatoes, Beans, Artichokes, Asparagus, Rhubarb,  
range of Chillies and much more

Not to forget our famous MAMMOTH ONIONS AND LEEKS

ROBINSON'S  
SEEDS AND  
PLANTS  
SEASON 2011

Write, phone, fax or email for your FREE 2011  
CATALOGUE available from mid September.

W Robinson & Son (Seeds & Plants) Ltd

FREEPOST NNW2347A

Preston. PR3 0BR

Tel. 01524 791210

Fax. 01524 791933

Email [info@mammothonion.co.uk](mailto:info@mammothonion.co.uk)

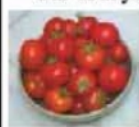
[www.mammothonion.co.uk](http://www.mammothonion.co.uk)

Established  
and family  
owned since  
1860

## THE REAL SEED CATALOGUE NEW 2011 SEED LIST

We list only the very best vegetable varieties - chosen by gardeners,  
for gardeners. Heirlooms and modern varieties, all easy to grow,  
chosen for best flavour and high yields. Get your copy now - new  
greens, peppers, beans, tomatoes, roots & herbs, plus old favourites.

Our 13th year of supplying great seed at reasonable prices.



Order quickly and easily online: [www.realseeds.co.uk](http://www.realseeds.co.uk)  
PO Box 18, Newport, Pembrokeshire, SA65 0AA ~ 01239 821107

### Terwins Seeds

FREE 2011 SEEDS CATALOGUE

Ordinary & Organic Vegetable, Herbs,  
also Flowers & Wild Flowers, Potatoes, Shallots  
& Onion Sets, Sweet Peas & much more.

Unit 5a, Peppers Hall, Old Hall Lane,

Cockfield, Suffolk, IP30 0HL

Tel / Fax: 01284 8228 255

e-mail: [info@terwinseeds.co.uk](mailto:info@terwinseeds.co.uk)

Or Buy Online @ [www.terwinseeds.co.uk](http://www.terwinseeds.co.uk)

## SOCIETIES

### THE ALLOTMENTS & GARDENS COUNCIL (UK)

Societies join for  
just £1.00 per  
member.

Individuals  
from £6.00

No increase in insurance  
premium or affiliation  
fees for 2010

Insurance scheme, seed scheme.  
Incredible discounts, no minimum order to qualify.  
Discounts on full range of potatoes.  
Legal help and assistance.  
Quarterly newsletter.

For further details about the A & G.C. (UK)  
and all other benefits contact Mr Knowles  
Tel/Fax: 0115 9276860  
e-mail: [rknowles@ndac.freemove.co.uk](mailto:rknowles@ndac.freemove.co.uk)  
[www.theallotmentsandgardenscounciluk.org.uk](http://www.theallotmentsandgardenscounciluk.org.uk)

## VEGETABLES

### Medwyns of Anglesey

Vegetable seed and Plant specialist  
My 2011 full colour catalogue is now ready  
with many new varieties.

SHOW WINNING CARROT

"SWEET CANDLE"

Send 3 First class stamps to:  
Llanor, Old School Lane, Llanfairpwll,  
Anglesey LL61 5RZ

e-mail: [mcdwyn@medwynsofanglesey.co.uk](mailto:mcdwyn@medwynsofanglesey.co.uk)  
11 consecutive Gold medals at Chelsea.  
Established since 1975

Vegetable Seeds  
Herb Seeds  
Seed Potatoes  
Seed Collection Packs  
Gift Boxes & Vouchers

PRICES FROM  
**59p**

**SIMPLY SEEDS**

[www.simplyseed.co.uk](http://www.simplyseed.co.uk)



direct  
**NEW**  
Seed and Plant Catalogues  
OUT NOW!



To request your FREE copy visit  
**[www.mr-fothergills.co.uk](http://www.mr-fothergills.co.uk)**  
or call 0845 371 0518 Please quote: FC11KG4

## SKIN CARE

## CRACKED HANDS (& FEET) HEALED IN 10 DAYS!

New Website - New Range - New Offers

Major Skin Care Breakthrough!

Our Beeswax Protective Hand & Foot Cream  
works fast healing your cracked hands & feet. It  
penetrates deeply moisturising your skin and is  
not greasy. It's also water, chemical, oil & dirt  
resistant so protects your hands from getting  
stained and chapped. It lasts for four or five  
hand washes too so is very economical.

This cream works and has a 100%  
No Risk Money Back Guarantee!

Order online or CALL FREE  
0800 0588 911 (Hours 24/7)

[www.StarkiesBeeswaxCreams.com](http://www.StarkiesBeeswaxCreams.com)

**Trial Offer!**  
**FREE**

Re-useable 1/4oz/7g

Pocket Tub worth £3.95

when you buy a 2oz/57g

Travel Tub for £9.95

(+ £3.95 P&P = £13.90)

Pay by Credit/Debit Card or Cheque. Richard Starkie Associates, KG 2/11  
Timber Cottage, Wistow, Leicester, LE8 0GF Email: [sales@starkies.com](mailto:sales@starkies.com)



### Simpson's Seeds & Plants

Huge range of seeds and  
plants for the kitchen garden.

All selected for flavour

Chilli, sweet pepper and  
tomato specialists plus herbs,  
salad leaves and lots more

**2011 CATALOGUE  
AVAILABLE NOW**

The Walled Garden Nursery  
Horningsham, Warminster,  
Wiltshire BA12 7NQ  
Tel: 01985 845004  
Fax: 01985 845052

[sales@simpsonsseeds.co.uk](mailto:sales@simpsonsseeds.co.uk)  
[www.simpsonsseeds.co.uk](http://www.simpsonsseeds.co.uk)

**Kitchen  
GARDEN**

To advertise  
call Bernadette on  
01507 529537



# winter Sale

SAVE OVER  
**20%**  
OFF  
RRP  
On all  
Greenhouses

## Introductory Offer

The all new Growhouse Greenhouses feature:

- Roof vents as standard
- Side vents as standard
- High capacity gutters & downpipes
- Toughened safety glass to BS.6206
- Stainless steel fixings as standard
- 100% designed and manufactured by British craftsmen
- Easy to assemble
- Free delivery to the UK mainland



**8'x 10' GROWHOUSE IN RED CEDAR**  
Also available as 6'x6', 6'x8' and a 6'x10'

At Growhouse it is our philosophy to keep things simple, creating top quality, affordable greenhouses.

**LEAN-TO**



Makes  
ideal use of  
asouth facing  
or courtyard garden.

**PATIO GLASSHOUSE**



A mini  
greenhouse  
which would sit  
comfortably on a patio or terrace.

**COLDFRAMES**  
AVAILABLE  
IN THREE SIZES



For our range  
of quality cedar  
coldframes visit us online.

FOR DETAILS OF ALL OUR OFFERS VISIT US ONLINE AT:

**[www.growhouse.co.uk](http://www.growhouse.co.uk)**

OR FOR OUR FREE BROCHURE CALL **0845 603 9791**

**grow house**  
Monument Place, Farndon, Chester CH3 6QP.



# HEALTHY CHICKENS, HAPPY YOU.



## Natural Control of Internal Parasites for your Poultry, Ducks and Fowl.

Verm-X for Poultry, Ducks and Fowl is the natural way to repel and control internal parasites, helping to keep your birds healthy and you and your family happy.

And because the award-winning range of macerated liquids and pellets is completely natural you can enjoy fresh eggs every day. There is no withdrawal period, sometimes needed with pharmaceutical preparations.

Verm-X products are available for a wide range of pets, equine, avian and smallholder animals, manufactured to the highest standards from unadulterated, non-GM, natural

ingredients and acknowledged by the Soil Association for use on organic farms.

Verm-X consists of herbs that have been used for centuries as a natural way to repel and control internal parasites.

The Verm-X range is widely available from country retailers and pet shops.

Check out our website for more details or give us a call on 0870 850 2313 to find your nearest stockist and for a free copy of our brochure.



**NOW WITH 20%  
EXTRA FREE!**

Buy our new 900g pack of Herbal Pellets for Poultry for the same price as our 750g pack (for a limited period only). Available from your local stockist.



**Verm-X®**  
Natural Control of Internal Parasites

**0870 850 2313**  
**www.verm-x.com**